



THE FINAL WAR



Cornell University Library

THE GIFT OF

Clark S. Northrup '93

A.240235

28/XII/09

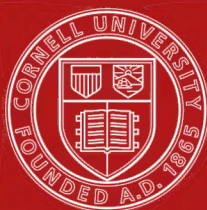
Cornell University Library
PS 3539.R122F4

The final war /



3 1924 021 710 722

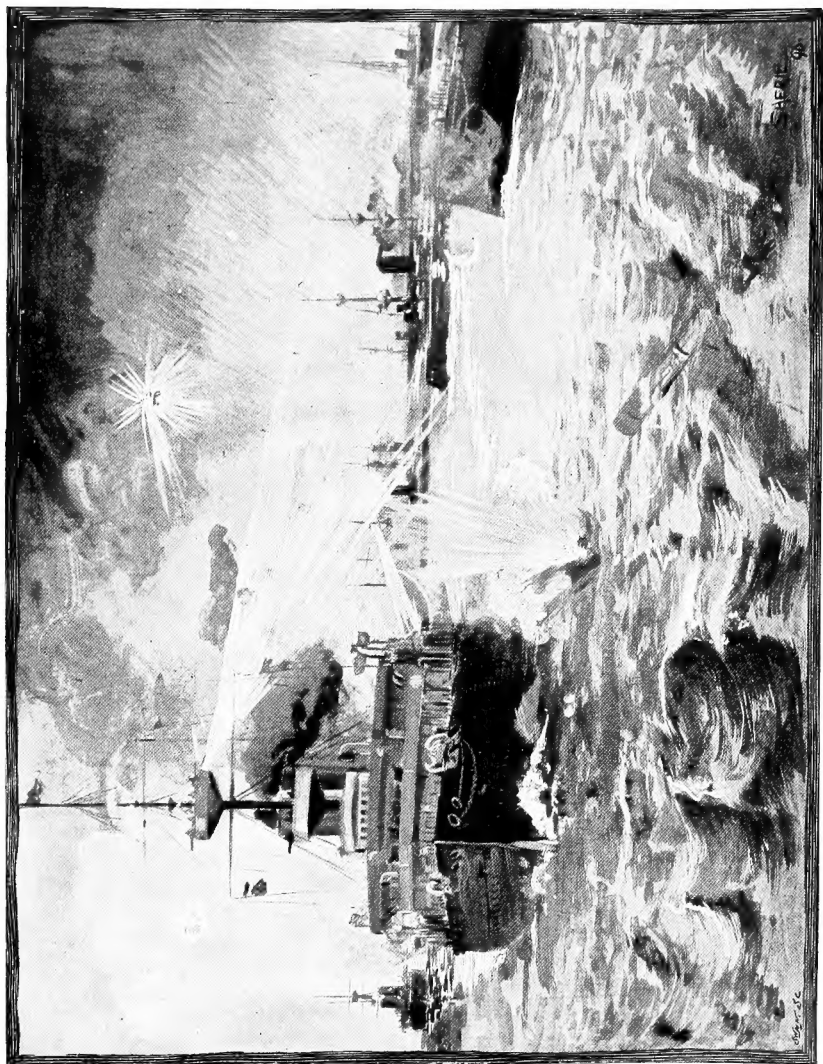
olin



Cornell University Library

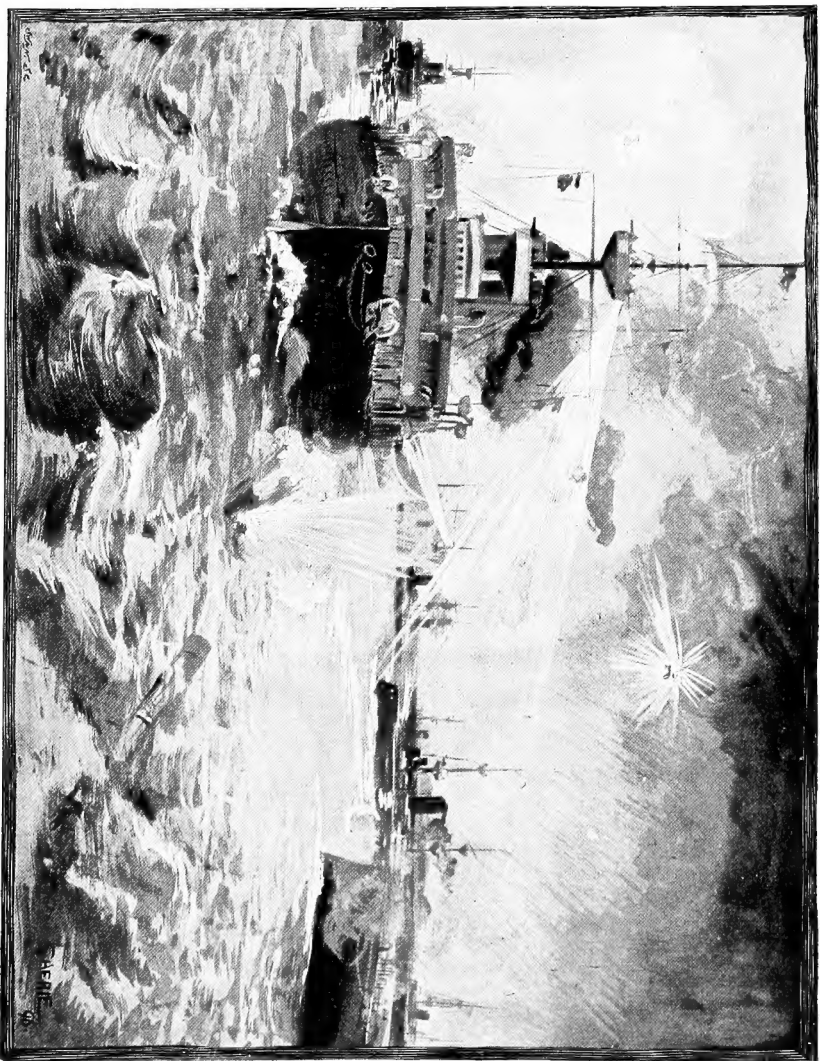
The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.



"IN LESS THAN TWO MINUTES EVERY SHIP WAS HOTLY ENGAGED."

(See page 46.)



"IN LESS THAN TWO MINUTES EVERY SHIP WAS HOTLY ENGAGED."

(See page 46.)

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY

ILLUSTRATED

501.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

LONDON

24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

The Knickerbocker Press

1896

H

12

COPYRIGHT, 1896

BY

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE AUTHOR'S HIGH
REGARD AND APPRECIATION
TO
PRIVATE THOMAS ATKINS

PREFACE.

A BOOK should not require explanation ; it should speak for itself. But to every rule there is an exception, and I think that *The Final War* is a story of such peculiar attributes that it behoves me to offer a public apology for its appearance.

For I have taken the whole world as my theme and its chief citizens are my characters. I can only hope that I have given no offence, as into the mouths of real personages I have placed the finest sentiments I could extract from a nature seared by journalism, whilst the people who get killed, or have other disagreeable things happen to them, are wholly fictitious.

I have tried to write a story of adventure. It may interest and amuse the reader, but I shall have utterly failed in my task if he does not rise from its perusal feeling proud if the English language be his mother tongue, or sad if it be not.

There is much I could explain, more that I would plead for, in the succeeding pages, but those two words just written, "The End," have a pathetic significance. If only you are as sorry as I am that the book is finished when you reach the last page, you will probably understand my feelings and my silence.

L. T.

201 PICCADILLY, W.

September, 1896.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—THE BALL AT THE EMBASSY	I
II.—A COUNCIL OF THE POWERS.	12
III.—THE SCENE IN THE HOUSE	18
IV.—HOW MAJOR PERKINS WON THE V. C.	29
V.—WHAT THE FLEET DID	40
VI.—THE PRINCE AND THE PEOPLE	50
VII.—THE VOYAGE OF THE "HORNET"	57
VIII.—ON THE BOULEVARDS	65
IX.—IMPREGNABLE GIBRALTAR	73
X.—AN ALLY AND A PROCLAMATION	82
XI.—THE CAPTURE OF HAVRE	93
XII.—HOW GERMANY WAS OUTWITTED	113
XIII.—THE DIVIDED STATES	126
XIV.—RUSSIA TO THE RESCUE	134
XV.—THE GERMAN EMPEROR	145
XVI.—THE GERMAN EMPEROR GETS A LESSON	154
XVII.—THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS	163
XXVIII.—CHEAP STEAM COAL	173
XIX.—THE EAGLE STRANGLES THE BEAR	183
XX.—ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES	191
XXI.—THE NEWS THE SPY SENT	201
XXII.—A SECRET MISSION	211
XXIII.—THE CROSSING OF THE HELMUND	220
XXIV.—THE RIDE THROUGH THE PASS	229
XXV.—ANOTHER AGINCOURT	243
XXVI.—MERCIER'S MISTAKE	254
XXVII.—ACROSS AMERICA IN SIXTY HOURS	264
XXVIII.—IN THE FATHERLAND	273

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIX.—THE RIGOUR OF THE GAME	284
XXX.—THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND	298
XXXI.—THE SHADOW OF DOOM	308
XXXII.—RODNEY BECOMES AN ADMIRAL	317
XXXIII.—“À PARIS!”	329
XXXIV.—THE END OF THE ROMANOFFS	342
XXXV.—A SORTIE FROM PARIS	354
XXXVI.—THE GERMAN EMPEROR PAUSES	365
XXXVII.—DR. JIM'S SECOND RAID	375
XXXVIII.—THE PRINCE AND THE EMPEROR	388
XXXIX.—HOW THE PARISIANS DANCED	399
XL.—THE ELECTRIC RIFLE	406
XLI.—PARIS TAKEN	417
XLII.—HOW ENGLAND RECEIVED THE NEWS	429
XLIII.—A MESSAGE OF EVERLASTING PEACE.	440
XLIV.—MOSTLY MATRIMONIAL	451
XLV.—THE DESTINY OF THE RACE	459

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
" IN LESS THAN TWO MINUTES EVERY SHIP WAS HOTLY ENGAGED."	
<i>Frontispiece.</i>	
THE PRINCE OF WALES REVIEWS THE TROOPS IN HYDE PARK . . .	52
" WILD CROWDS RUSHED THROUGH THE STREETS"	68
" GIVE ME A CUP OF TEA, GIRLS "	90
" I HAVE SPENT THE NIGHT IN READING, SMOKING, AND THINKING "	112
" WITH A RINGING CHEER THEY DASHED OVER THE DAM " . . .	122
" MAHOMED KHAN RAN THE RUSSIAN THROUGH THE HEART " . .	228
" HE WAS CAPTURED BY A DRAGOON "	252
" IT WAS NOT THREE O'CLOCK WHEN HARINGTON DASHED UP TO HEADQUARTERS "	256
" I GUESS YOU ARE OPEN TO A DEAL "	270
" WELL, SIR, HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO CARRY MY ARMY ACROSS ? " .	318
" THE EXCELLENT CAPTAIN GIVES YOU A FINAL CHANCE " . . .	340
" AS THE TSAR RODE SLOWLY THROUGH THE CROWDED STREETS " .	344
" WHAT IS THE OFFICER'S NAME ? "	362
" I FURTHER ASK YOUR ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE "	372
" A BRILLIANT CEREMONY AT ST. GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE " .	456

THE FINAL WAR.

CHAPTER I.

THE BALL AT THE EMBASSY.

THE month of May in Paris, if the elements be reasonably propitious, is a perfectly delightful period, and May-day of 1898 heralded in the promise of a gracious summer. The French capital was more than ordinarily full of visitors, and life in the world of fashion was like the changeful scenes of a *ballet divertissement*. Americans were there "from Chicago and New York, spending millions made in packing pork," Russian notabilities abounded, and Germans, the male element vastly predominating, were in such numbers that the wonted supply of lager beer fell short in the cafés. A mad whirl of gaiety and light-heartedness filled the thoughts of every class of society. This social abandonment was, if possible, accentuated by a species of political electricity that permeated the air, and of which all men were dimly conscious.

The new Ministry had taken up and developed the policy of colonial expansion given effect to by their predecessors, and a singular *rapprochement* with Germany was vaguely supposed to have contributed in a very remarkable way to the furtherance of French ambition. Both countries had been working amicably together for nearly a year, and already the result was felt in the most vulnerable portions of the British Empire.

It is true that England had long ago secured all the best markets for her produce, that her ships carried five-sixths of the commerce of the world, and that her surplus population had the pick of many continents wherein to live and prosper. But a determined attempt was now being made by her great commercial rivals to take from her some, at least, of the advantages gained by centuries of enterprise backed up by daring perseverance.

The Rhine dwindled into a stream of no political significance. Men openly said on the boulevards and in the *brasseries* of Paris and the beer gardens of Berlin that the star of England was beginning to wane. As a witty Frenchman put it: "The bones of Englishmen whiten the by-ways of the world: they make most excellent sign-posts for our future progress."

But at the British Embassy, Lord and Lady Eskdale and their beautiful daughter Irene, felt that, come what might in the future, it was their present duty to maintain in regal style the hospitable traditions of the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, and thus it came to pass that the first night in May was chosen for an official dinner, to be followed by a grand ball.

Strange and disquieting rumours were afloat. Scarce formed into words, they hinted at a fatal blow to be struck at some predominant power. To Captain Edward Harington—who not only filled the position of junior military attaché at the Embassy, but was also the accepted lover of Lady Irene Vyne—the Home Government owed the first suspicion of a secret and hostile combination.

He had pieced together some curious observations, made in his presence by certain high officials in France, and his conclusions seemed no less accurate than alarming.

Inquiries made amongst the London bankers, with whom nearly every foreign prince had large dealings, showed that there had been a steady and continual withdrawal for no accountable reason, of the securities they held. This was

enough to put the Government on the alert. Harington's timely service was of considerable value, and he reaped the benefit, for the kindly interest of an exalted personage means much. In fact, a staff appointment at Aldershot, when the next vacancy occurred, was promised to him.

His sister Ethel, a charming girl of Irene's age, was in Paris on a visit to the Eskdales, and it was one of those coincidences suggestive of arrangement that Lieutenant Frank Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, should have chosen gay Lutetia as the scene of a short leave of ten days. Harington and he were fast friends, and it was not unlikely that the tie of friendship might be strengthened, if the guardsman had not judged amiss the tendency of the pleasant-mannered sailor's thoughts. It was his ardent wish that Rodney might marry his sister, and Ethel had even stronger views on the question than her brother, so for once the course of true love appeared to be running smoothly.

The gathering in Lady Eskdale's reception room before dinner was announced was very select indeed. The French President and his wife, the Russian Ambassador and the Grand Duchess, the German Ambassador, the French Ministers of War and Marine, the Governor of Paris, and quite a number of other great people made the brilliant *salon* glitter with the magnificence of their diamond stars and ornaments, whilst the lovely dresses of the women toned down the gorgeous uniforms by their softer hues.

The British Ambassador, of course, took in Madame la Présidente to dinner. His interested and urbane manner gave no indication of the troubled state of his thoughts, though in very truth there had that afternoon been much cause for perplexity. A cipher telegram, dispatched at mid-day to London, was unaccountably interfered with *en route*, and a call from the Foreign Office for a repetition resulted in even greater confusion. In the endeavour to put matters right he also discovered that the telephonic communication between the two countries had unaccountably broken down.

Now, his message to Lord Salisbury contained a very plain intimation that affairs were in an alarmingly unsettled condition in France, whilst large sales of British securities on the Bourse had emanated from inspired quarters, and not from any public movement. These sales had been proceeding steadily for some days, and had seemingly culminated that morning. From this condition of affairs he argued the necessity for keen watchfulness on the part of the British Government.

By an extraordinary blunder, this message, although in a cypher believed to be known only to three men in London and three in Paris, was metamorphosed into an absurd reference to the weather, and the repetition brought about an inexplicable medley of meaningless nonsense. But Lord Eskdale was even more suave than usual to the President's wife.

There had been a grand review of the garrison of Paris that day, and the lady, with the fanfare of the trumpets still in her ears, asked the Ambassador what he thought of the troops.

"They were superb," he replied. "Their soldierly qualities were such that I almost regretted it."

"But why?"

"I would prefer to see such perfect manhood engaged in the arts of peace rather than part and parcel of a huge machine of destruction."

"That is exactly what I should expect to hear from an Englishman," said Madame.

The Ambassador laughed. "Have we such a poor reputation as fire-eaters, then?" he queried.

"You speak with the accent of success," she retorted. "It is always the interest of those who have the booty to prate of peace."

"In such a matter, England's interest," he replied gravely, "is the interest of the world. The preservation of the peace of Europe is our inheritance."

Madame smiled.

"What would you do," she asked, "if the French were to dispute your guardianship?"

"Ah, Madame," returned the courtly Ambassador, "it is not your men we fear, it is your women."

"You laugh!" exclaimed Madame, stung by his playful treatment of her words. "But take care. A hundred years ago France taught the world the art of government. She must now teach it the art of empire."

Lord Eskdale glanced rapidly at her, and for a moment a troubled look rested upon his face.

"A woman is seldom epigrammatic," he reflected, "without being also indiscreet."

Then aloud, with perfect serenity: "You have achieved more than half the task already, my dear lady."

Madame paused appreciably before she answered, with a quick look at her companion: "In what sense?"

"Our hearts are already prostrate; it needs but the subjugation of our arms."

"Ah, you were only leading me up to a pretty compliment. But I am glad that you acknowledge it is for us to contest with you the domination of the world."

"I yield it to you now, without a murmur of dissent," he said.

The Ambassador was clearly in a frivolous mood, so she changed the conversation to the prospects of the exhibition two years later.

Why, he never knew until afterwards—but Lord Eskdale felt that he added years to his life during the progress of that meal. It was apparently unending, and it required all his powers of self-command to restrain himself from cursing the excellence and prodigality of his cook.

At last it came to a conclusion, and Lady Eskdale rose, whilst his Excellency escorted Madame la Présidente to the door of the drawing-room. He returned at once, to find that the President and the Governor of Paris wished to be ex-

cused from attending the ball on the ground that affairs of departmental importance in connection with the spring manœuvres of the army in the north required their attention. Their departure helped to break up the other men into groups, and Lord Eskdale encountered Harington, who was present officially, near the door.

"Edward," he said, "where is your friend Rodney? Can I see him at once?"

Harington laughed. "To tell the honest truth," he replied, "he is dining in my bedroom, where he will dress, as he is bound to Ethel for the first dance."

"Tell him to prepare for a long journey at once, without anyone being the wiser. You do the same, and meet me in my private office in five minutes."

The guardsman was clever enough to smilingly assent as he lit a cigarette, for the German Ambassador had come to say that he also had pressing official work which would prevent him from remaining longer, and he hurried from the room.

In one of the passages Harington met Irene. He glanced hurriedly around to see if anyone was looking, then took her in his arms, hopelessly crushing her frock the while, kissed her fervently, and said: "Good-bye, dearest. Your father will explain, but don't say a word to a soul."

And he disappeared towards his own apartments.

Irene thought he had taken leave of his wits, but she kept her amazement to herself, nevertheless.

When Frank Rodney heard his instructions, he thanked Heaven that he had had his dinner, seized some of Harington's clothes and shirts, in case he should not have time to go to his hotel, and in three minutes announced himself ready for orders.

When they reached his Excellency's study they found him awaiting them.

Without any preamble he thus addressed the naval officer:

“Lieutenant Rodney, I wish you to catch the ten o'clock train from the Gare de Lyon for Italy. You will reach Modane to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. From there send by Italian cable the single word ‘*Britannia*’ to the Governor of Malta, and to Sir Michael Culme, Seymour, who commands the Mediterranean fleet, which is at present at Valetta. Repeat these two messages from Turin in the afternoon in case the first may have miscarried, as the officials at Modane are French. A homeward bound P. and O. steamer arrives at Brindisi the following morning, and you must catch it, if necessary taking a special train for the purpose, and wiring the captain to wait for you as a Queen’s messenger. Go on to Malta and tell the Governor in person the circumstances under which I sent you, and proceed by the same steamer, if you can, to Gibraltar, where you will then find the Mediterranean fleet. Here is £250 in gold for your expenses, and this sum should be ample for all contingencies. It is now 9.15. You can do what I ask?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Rodney. “But my leave expires in two days.”

“Captain Harington will get that put right for you at the Admiralty. You, Harington, will leave for London by the eleven o'clock train, and, if you reach there by to-morrow morning—it is possible you may be detained—find Lord Salisbury or the Under-Secretary, and tell him my precise instructions to Lieutenant Rodney, subsequently explaining matters at the Admiralty. To-day my telegraphic dispatches have been interfered with, and from other indications I fear immediate and pressing European complications.”

“It is an odd thing, sir,” said Harington, “that the French army manœuvres should be held so early this year, and quite close to Brest, whilst the Germans have followed their example in the locality of Bremerhaven.”

“And this morning, sir, whilst driving with Eth—I mean Miss Harington—near Vincennes, I counted 400 field-guns with their limbers, drawn up in a barrack square, and an

astonishing number of empty trucks on some adjacent railway sidings," added Rodney.

"I know, I know," said Lord Eskdale, who was much agitated. "But now, my dear boys, go, and God be with you. If I am mistaken, Harington, return here towards the close of the week. Leave by this door, as it commands readier access to your rooms."

He silently shook their hands and opened a door other than that by which they had entered.

Their preparations were soon made, and Rodney was evidently wishful to say something which he found difficulty in expressing. At last he spoke:

"By-the-way, Harington," he said, "his Excellency forgot one thing. I will wire you at the club at Modane tomorrow to say I have got through. It may be allowed to pass even if the frightful burst-up which this business seems to indicate comes off. One more word, old chap, kiss Ethel for me."

"Oh," said Harington, "I did n't know you had reached that stage. Good-bye, old fellow, and good luck."

And their *fiacres* rattled off through the lines of carriages which were bringing up guests to the Embassy.

The Russian Ambassador and several French Ministers had by this time absented themselves, and Lady Eskdale received more than one laughing complaint from a wife concerning the ungallantry of a missing spouse. Her ladyship was puzzled, but could get no opportunity of a quiet word with her husband, who looked completely at his ease chatting with various distinguished personages.

Irene and Ethel, who were, beyond doubt, the loveliest women present, were astonished at the absence of their wonted partners, and if Irene had some perception of the facts of the case, she obeyed her lover's instructions and kept her scant information to herself. At last Ethel Harington lost all patience, and asked Lord Eskdale if he knew where her brother was.

His Excellency smiled as he replied: "Both he and Lieutenant Rodney have left Paris on affairs of State. They had no time even to say 'Good-bye' to you, my dear."

Whereupon Ethel, in wonderment, communicated the news to Irene, and they both marvelled greatly; but the fact did not prevent them from scribbling a name in front of every dance on the programme.

About midnight Lord Eskdale's English valet managed to reach his master and whisper: "There's an English gentleman in the hall, my lord, and he says as how he has a note for your lordship from Captain Harington, and he will give it to no one but your lordship personally."

"Take him to my study, Jenkins," was the reply, and when his Excellency entered the room later he found awaiting him a stout, red-faced Briton, in the regulation check suit and deerstalker hat of the middle-class Englishman, when travelling on the Continent.

The stranger evidently meant to make sure of his man before stating his errand.

"Is your Excellency, my lord—I mean is your lordship his ex—that is to say, my lord, are you——"

"Yes, I am Lord Eskdale," was the kindly answer, much to his relief.

"Well, my lord, my name's Briggs, William Briggs, of Catford, where I do a bit in the bicycle line, though I don't ride much myself nowadays, being a bit too 'eavy above. I've bin over 'ere a week, my lord, partly on business and partly on pleasure, as the sayin' is, and I was a-goin' home to-night when a young gent 'e comes up to me on the platform, an' he says, says 'e: 'You're an Englishman?' 'Why, anybody can see that,' says I. An' says 'e: 'Are you in any special 'urry back?' and says I: 'It's the season, but I won't lose much for the matter of a few hours. But why d' ye ax?' Says 'e: 'I'm Captin' Harington from the Hembassy. 'Ere's my card,'—which 'e gev me—'I want yer to do his lordship the Hambassador a service.

Will yer stop till the morning train and take 'im'—meaning you, your lordship—'a note on a matter of great himportance to England, and 'ere 's a fiver for yourself.' 'E seemed in desperate earnest, my lord, an' I would n't take 'is fiver, but 'ere 's the note," and he handed Lord Eskdale an envelope addressed to himself and endorsed, "Per kind favour of Mr. Briggs."

"'E said as 'ow I was n't to give it to anybody but your lordship's own self, my lord," and Mr. Briggs glowed with the thought of the fine story this would make for the *habitués* of the Cat and Anchor at Catford.

The note ran as follows: "Whilst detained for a moment in a block of carriages outside the Embassy, I heard one coachman say to another that he wondered why the President and a lot of Ministers and Ambassadors were driving off to Versailles at this time of the night. Here on the platform, there are General de Rosny, who, as you know, is Chief of the Staff, and a large number of staff officers travelling to Brest by the northern line. I thought you should know this.—E. H."

"Mr. Briggs," said Lord Eskdale, when he had gravely re-read the pencilled message, "you have, indeed, done your country a good turn by your readiness to postpone your journey. Will you write to me from Catford and assure me of your safe arrival there?"

"I will, my lord," and Briggs visibly inflated.

"You had better stay here to-night, as it is so late, and I presume your luggage is at the station. My man will look after you. Good-night."

Briggs did not explain that his luggage, consisting of a woollen shirt, a pair of socks, a brush and comb, and six collars, was contained in the small handbag on the table—his mind was too full of the glorious possibilities of Catford.

The President's wife had retired at midnight, and by three o'clock the last carriage had rolled away from the courtyard of the Embassy. Lady Eskdale was about to seek her hus-

band and chat with him concerning the events of the night when a closely-veiled woman sprang out of a hired carriage at the entrance to the Embassy, sped silently past the astonished footmen, and approached her ladyship. It was Madame la Présidente, pallid, with a fever-light in her eyes.

"My dear," she said in trembling accents, "I like you, and I have come, wrongly, perhaps, to warn you. You will be called upon to leave France before many hours have sped. I tell you, that you may be prepared. Farewell!"

Without another word of explanation, she quitted her astounded hostess, and was rapidly driven off.

CHAPTER II.

A COUNCIL OF THE POWERS.

DURING the same night a strange scene was being enacted at Versailles.

On leaving the British Embassy Lord Eskdale's principal guests entered their carriages. Quiet directions were given to their coachmen, and the vehicles turned into the magnificent avenue of the Champs Elysées, already radiant with the freshness of early spring. They sped swiftly along past the Arc de Triomphe, and entered the Bois de Boulogne. It was scarcely ten o'clock when they passed Longchamps, on which the white tents of the soldiers, who had that day been reviewed, shone beneath the moon. Soon Passy was left behind, and the hoofs of the horses clattered along the deserted streets of the village of Versailles. The carriages drove through the great gates of the Court of Honour, and pulled up before a narrow doorway where their occupants got out.

In a tapestried room above, a small group of men awaited them. Here, in the pleasure palace built by the great Louis, where he feasted with his mistresses and learnt the fatal news of Blenheim that shattered his ambitions—where Napoleon, too, met his Ministers after his brilliant campaign in Italy, and rested before making his last dash to Waterloo—a grim and unexampled Council was being held.

There were scarcely twenty persons present, but each was a figure of commanding importance in European politics. The military and diplomatic strength of a whole continent might be said to be represented here at its best. It was a

strange alliance, hereditary foes meeting in friendly union, and Ministers who had for years schemed against each other with all the artifices of cunning at last linked together in a common purpose.

No small issue could have achieved this miracle. Before these men was set the hardest and most momentous task that ever perplexed the strength and wisdom of the world.

The President of the French Republic took the chair at the head of the table. Opposite him was General Caprivi, the Chancellor of Germany. To right and left were M. Hanotaux and Count Holbach, the French and German Foreign Ministers, and several of the chief diplomats of both countries. Near the President sat a tall and distinguished-looking man, with hair of iron-grey, and a grave, impenetrable countenance, who seldom spoke, but at whom, from time to time, those around him glanced uneasily. It was General Gourko, the trusted emissary of the Tsar of Russia. Other faces, too, known in every Court in Europe, and feared in many, might be seen.

Each one was grave and anxious. It might have been thought that some guilty bond held them in artificial union. Distrust seemed to peer from their eyes as a chance remark called up the lurking fires of hereditary hate. Yet there was a respectful silence when the President opened the conference.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have just paid the last official visit of a President of France to the representative of the Court of England. The armies of Germany and France are on the point of success. To-morrow before noon we shall be at war with England!"

He turned, with a true French love of dramatic effect, to mark the effect of these words. The only response was a grave bow from Count Caprivi.

"The details we, of course, all know. It is enough for me to say that they have been efficiently carried out. England is secure and confident. Her Ambassador is occupied in the dance. Her navy is distributed over the globe. Her

army is in India. And yet at Brest and Bremerhaven there are the invincible navies of the two allied powers, together with transports that will carry to the shores of England a mighty army. To-morrow we shall land upon those shores. Within a week we shall be at the gates of London. There is nothing that can withstand us. It may be that the instinctive courage of the English race may lead to a defence of London. We may not be able to occupy the city for three weeks. But I believe you are with me when I express the conviction that within a month the British Empire will be shattered, and that the flags of the chief united powers of Europe will float from the dome of the Mansion House ! ”

He paused and requested M. Hanotaux to detail the exact position of their preparations. Reading from an official document, the Foreign Minister showed how absolutely complete were the plans of the two-allies, and how unsuspecting the English Government. An army large enough to win a continent, and a navy that might sweep a dozen oceans were ready to pounce upon the little island they all so deeply feared.

A murmur of approval followed the recital, and then Count Caprivi interrupted:

“ Time is precious, and we have much to settle. The destruction of Great Britain is a matter of simple generalship. We need not waste time in estimating the number of days or the details of military occupation. We may regard the British Empire as already struck off the map. But I must remind you that several points remain yet to be settled in our joint treaty. How is Great Britain to be dismembered, and how are we to share her dependencies ? ”

Here M. Hanotaux rose and walked behind the chair of the President. Touching a cord that hung down from a roller upon the wall, he liberated a large map of the world which covered the whole space. It had many curious lines upon it and strange colours. Across the British Isles were written the words: “ Under joint government.”

It was the map of the world as it was intended to be after the collapse of England. The strange colours were the emblems of the foreign powers that had bidden for her colonies. The lines were marks to show how, in the greed of cruel appetite, the confederates had arranged to share some fair possession and split up a fertile country into fragments.

"Here," said the President, "is a *précis* of what we have already arranged. You will see," pointing to the map, "that Canada falls to France, East Africa to Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa are governed by a joint board for the profit of the allies. Malta and Aden are dismantled. Dover is held by a joint garrison. England herself," he concluded, "will be governed by a military council in the interests of France and Germany for a time at least. We are not inclined to be merciless, and if she behaves herself, we may be induced later on to grant a limited form of home rule, which will necessitate a sanction for all legislative measures from a combined Board of Administrators, meeting alternately at Berlin and Paris. We shall also occupy Ireland to watch movements in England, and stamp out any signs of rebellion. Turkey and the Egyptian question can be settled satisfactorily at a later date."

"There yet remain," said the German War Minister, "Gibraltar, India, West Africa, the West Indies, the Chinese possessions, and a number of smaller but yet difficult points."

An eager discussion now arose, in which no one seemed prepared to come to a point. And at times there passed looks of malice and anger ill-suppressed as some slight word lit up hideous depths of selfishness or jealousy.

At last M. Hanotaux observed:

"We might begin with India. It is a large and splendid territory. France at least——"

At this point General Gourko's impassive face relaxed. Turning to the President, he said:

"There is no need to discuss that point. India is claimed by Russia."

M. Hanotaux started—and turned red.

“A huge plum!” he exclaimed. “Do you want the lion’s share, sir, without doing the lion’s part?”

“M. le Président,” said Gourko calmly, paying no heed, “there can be no discussion on this head. My instructions are final and peremptory. You say we are not fighting for our spoil. Is it not agreed that Russia’s part is to hang back and make no move till the moment comes—if ever such a moment needs to come? You forget, perhaps, that it is you, and not we, that have demanded this blow. You have been forced to action by the decline of your commerce, the decay of your trade, your imperative need of fresh markets, your lack of colonies. England has seized all that is fairest on earth, and you can no longer exist against so huge a monopoly. You are both in desperate straits, and the imperative voice of your suffering peoples forces you to close with this all-devouring race which is checking your growth, crushing your strength, and throttling your prosperity. That is why you have formed this alliance, is it not?”

He paused, but there was no answer.

“Russia, however,” he continued, “has no such need. She has rich and fertile lands. Siberia alone adds a second empire to her throne. What she wants is, no doubt, a sea-coast. That sea-coast is India. If Russia helps you to secure the success of schemes she is not interested in, she demands that sea-coast. Gentlemen, you cannot oppose the resistless necessity of things. Russia must and will secure for herself the Indian Empire.”

His words fell inexorable and unanswerable. The quiescence of Russia was essential to England’s overthrow. It was essential to the peaceful division of spoil. Large though the price she asked, there could be no refusal.

Then rose a debate upon Gibraltar, and it wellnigh brought to a close the temporary alliance between the powers. That impregnable fortress was coveted by all. But Count Holbach had not come unprepared for this. He had, that morning,

had a long interview with the Spanish Minister, and it was in his power to outwit his French comrade.

He proposed that Gibraltar be returned to Spain.

To his joy, the French Minister accepted this method of settlement as the most satisfactory way out of the difficulty. If he could have seen a letter bearing the official stamp from Madrid that even then lay in M. Hanotaux's pocket, he would perhaps have been less satisfied with himself. Even now had the allies commenced to scheme against each other.

And thus the Conference went on, and by slow degrees all of the British Empire that remained was divided between the two countries. What was left of England was a crippled island under the heel of a despotic military government, a tributary state of less consequence than Bulgaria, and a people crushed, ruined, and enslaved.

"One point only," observed Caprivi, as the Council was about to rise. "Germany, of course, claims Belgium."

The Frenchmen started to their feet at this amazing announcement.

"Impossible!" cried the President.

"Not so," replied Caprivi calmly. "It is no doubt a prize of value, but we are prepared to pay for it."

M. Hanotaux turned upon him a look of disdain.

"And what payment do you presume to consider adequate?" he said.

The German put his finger carelessly upon a map which lay on the table. Then quietly:

"We offer Alsace and Lorraine!"

It was a startling *dénouement* of the grim drama of hatred and selfishness that had just been played. But the German statesman knew his men.

Before he returned to Paris that night he placed in his pocket a signed *précis*, in which Belgium figured as a German dependency.

It was almost dawn when the Council rose.

"Adieu, gentlemen," said the President with a bow. "When we next meet, it will be in Whitehall."

CHAPTER III.

THE SCENE IN THE HOUSE.

EARLY the following morning it was known throughout London that something unusual was happening.

The lynx-eyed chroniclers of Ministerial movements brought to Fleet Street the intelligence that the Foreign Office had been thrown into unwonted commotion, as soon as it was opened, by the arrival from Paris of a young officer who sent in an urgent demand to see Lord Salisbury or the Under-Secretary.

The Prime Minister was away, but after the messenger had been closeted with the Under-Secretary for ten minutes, a telegram was dispatched to Hatfield, and special communications were sent to the residences of all the Cabinet Ministers summoning them to an immediate meeting. Meanwhile, the Under-Secretary had driven over to the War Office, where, in a short time, he was in close conferences with Lord Lansdowne, the Duke of Devonshire, and the Commander-in-Chief.

Wild rumours of every description were soon rife in the city, but the mood of the public generally was one of incredulity. In the absence of certain information it was felt that the importance of these incidents had been unduly exaggerated. Never had the political horizon been more serene; or the sense of public security more strong. Still, curiosity was sufficiently roused to draw a large number of spectators to the assembling of the House of Commons at midday.

But the aspect of the House was not one calculated to allay anxiety. Its members, as if constrained by a common

impulse, had gathered from far and near in full numbers. There was no vestige of the carelessness which is generally to be discerned on days usually set apart for private business. Scattered about the precincts of the House in groups, they were earnestly discussing the occurrences of the morning, oppressed with vague forebodings that presaged a crisis.

Within the Chamber itself the scene was still less reassuring. The front Ministerial bench was absolutely unoccupied, and none but lieutenants kept watch and ward. Even the Opposition leaders were missing, save in two instances, and it was noticed with surprise and consternation that these gentlemen were summoned away almost as soon as they arrived. Excitement grew to a high pitch of tension when it was learned that a joint meeting of party leaders was then being held in the apartments of the Leader of the House, and that a courier had been dispatched by special train to Windsor.

Alone, amid all this bewilderment, one small body of men sat, grim and unmoved, as if disturbed by no passions but their own, and with minds firm set upon a common purpose. It was the Irish party, who had been fortunate enough to secure first place in the ballot for precedence upon this day, and were seeking to convince their fellow-members of the urgent importance of an Act to secure self-government for the County of Cork. Whilst the gravest statements were flying about the corridors of the House, and Liberals and Conservatives alike were thrilled with the sense of a common peril, the Irishmen did not swerve for a moment from their purpose.

The debate had commenced in an acrimonious manner; it had now become tragic. Finding no Cabinet Minister to assail, the Irish members consoled themselves by assailing each other. Mr. Healy had denounced Mr. Justin McCarthy, Mr. Sexton had denounced Mr. Healy, and Mr. Redmond had fallen on all three. The speeches disclosed a remarkable versatility in terms of abuse which reached its

height when Mr. Dillon observed, amidst loud applause, that "the British lion would have his wings clipped unless he washed his hands in the flames of repentance," and added that "Mr. Balfour had been for twelve years the hereditary enemy of the Irish race."

Conspicuous amongst all was Dr. Tanner, whose crude and elementary style seemed born of the rude shocks of Parliamentary adversity. Twice had he sought to stretch the rules of the House as far as he might without breaking them, and twice had the Speaker called him to order, and threatened to name him. The debate had already lasted three hours. Dr. Tanner had got to the length of shaking his fist under the nose of a mild and inoffensive brother who had unfortunately cheered him at the wrong moment, and the Speaker was on the point of rising to fulfil the usual painful duty of bidding him withdraw, when, from behind Mr. Guyll's chair, Mr. Arthur Balfour appeared, followed by every occupant of the Treasury bench, whilst the Opposition leaders also quietly took their places. Upon each face there was an air of gravity which not even the severest issues had hitherto called forth.

A swift movement passed over the House, and in a moment—as though its members had learned the arrival of Ministers by intuition—every seat was occupied. Rarely had the Second Chamber been so crowded. Excitement grew when it was noticed that Lord Salisbury had entered the Peers' Gallery, and with him the Cabinet Ministers who belonged to the Upper House. There was a dead silence—the oppressive stillness that is less a calm than the momentary pause in the fury of a tempest. Dr. Tanner sat down abruptly, awed by the solemnity of the moment.

Without delay, and amidst a general hush, the Leader of the House rose to his feet. As he advanced to the table it was noticed that he had no longer the languid manner commonly ascribed to him. He stood upright, pale, stern, determined, with an air of resolute pride and the dignity

befitting a supreme occasion. There was no need for him to claim, in formal language, the indulgence of the House for interrupting its proceedings on a matter of State of pressing importance. Every eye was directed to him, every ear was strained to catch his opening words.

"There devolves upon me, sir," he began, turning for a moment to the Speaker, and not without a trace of emotion in his voice, "a grave and responsible duty. I have to inform the House that a crisis has arrived more serious and more pressing than any which has hitherto occurred in the history of this country. Without warning and without just cause, whilst enjoying prosperity at home and in apparent peace with all the world, in the fulness of that content and happiness which have marked the reign of a wise and beneficent Sovereign to whom we draw still closer in loyalty and affection at a moment of common trial, we are faced with a danger which calls for all our courage and all our patriotism. Three hours ago there was placed in the hands of Her Majesty's Government a declaration of war from France and Germany."

These words, spoken slowly and distinctly, fell upon the ears of the House in a deathlike stillness. For a moment its members seemed stunned. Mr. Balfour's statement was difficult to credit, hard to understand, and, in the solemn stillness which followed, the House seemed groping in amazement to discover the sense of the phrases they had heard, to realise the terrible import that they bore.

And then a thrill swept through the Chamber—a thrill of horror, of indignation, but not of fear. The House of Commons never looked more dignified and impressive than when, after its first impulse of surprise, it sat rigid and impassive to hear the full story of this catastrophe.

"When I tell you, sir," continued Mr. Balfour, "that by the terms of this declaration we have not merely to anticipate the attack of two powerful enemies, but that we may expect it now, at this very moment—that, in fact, hostilities

have already commenced—this House will realise that the present is not a time for lengthy explanation. It will be enough for me to say that, without previous negotiations, demands have suddenly been made of Her Majesty's Government—demands shameful to receive and shameful to repeat in this House. Our enemies, whom yesterday we deemed our friends, asked nothing less than the dismemberment of the British Empire, and I need not say that it was in consequence of the immediate and scornful rejection of this ultimatum that the declarations of war, signed by the heads of the two combined nations, were handed to us. We," and here Mr. Balfour drew himself up to his full height and turned upon the House, "we needed not the formality of a conference with the Parliament of England to indignantly cast aside the terms of peace, such as they were. We knew that you stood, in equal scorn and unanimity, behind us."

He paused, and in a moment a ringing cheer went up. The House had regained its composure, if it lost nothing of its excitement, and a wave of passionate emotion passed over it, fusing all parties into one—the party that stood behind all differences and made the British nation.

The Leader of the House then explained in greater detail how the two Ambassadors had called upon Lord Salisbury, and how the terms they asked had been peremptorily rejected. They had then handed in the formal declarations of war, which dated from midday. Free passage from England had been demanded and granted, and the representatives of France and Germany were no longer on our shores. There was redoubled excitement when he described the prompt action of the Government.

"At such a juncture," he continued, "when England is face to face with two of the strongest nations of Europe—and Heaven grant that this be all!—it is no time for the accentuation of party differences. Two allied countries should at least be faced by a united people. We deemed we should be best showing the indomitable strength and single

patriotism of our beloved land if for purposes of national defence, the line of political difference should entirely disappear. It was with this idea foremost, and, secondly, to ally with ourselves the best intellect and resource of England, that Her Majesty's Government sent for the leaders of the Liberal Party and asked them to assist in forming a Council of National Safety.

"It is, I am aware," he went on, amid enthusiastic cheers, "an unusual course, but our danger is also unusual. It is no time to stand by the shibboleths of form or precedent. It would be almost an insult to add that such assistance was given as soon as asked, and that a Council has been formed by mutual agreement which includes all that is most wise and most experienced in English statesmanship.

"If our enemies have counted upon the acerbities of party warfare as any evidence of a disunited nation, they will learn, bitterly and to their cost, that the tumult of political strife can never disturb, however slightly or remotely, the deep and eternal love that we all bear alike to our native land. They will come to realise that jealousy and rivalry pass away before the dangers that threaten us, and that we stand before the foe one race, one empire, one people, one party."

Mr. Balfour sat down amid a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm. He had struck, nobly and well, the one note common to all Englishmen.

There was a moment's pause, and then Sir William Harcourt rose. His voice was broken with emotion as in brief words he thanked the Leader of the House for giving utterance with fervour so intense to the feelings of all parties. "Sir," he concluded, turning full upon the Speaker, "from this moment there is no Opposition. The very term ceases to exist in the hour that our shores are threatened by a foreign foe. The Government has no supporters more warm than those who in time of peace have been compelled by conviction to oppose its policy."

The nerves of the House were so overwrought that it was

perhaps well there should have occurred something in the nature of an anti-climax. The Irish party had given no sign of the feelings that actuated them when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain rose to continue the discussion with a few incisive words. He recalled to the memory of the House some recent utterances of M. Constans in the French Senate.

"That statesman," he observed, "has not refrained from hinting at disunion on our own shores. He has plainly told us that a foreign enemy might look for help from Ireland, but,"—and the right honourable gentleman glanced fixedly at the Irish benches—"he went on to say that if the French Government had to deal with similar threats of disloyalty from any essential member of the Republic they would speedily settle insubordination by sending the ring-leaders to New Caledonia."

He was continuing when, to the amazement of the House, Dr. Tanner leaped to his feet, evidently under the stress of ungovernable excitement. Advancing several steps along the floor of the House between the crowded benches of startled members and hastily unbuttoning his frock coat, he exclaimed fiercely:

"Did he say that?"

Then tearing one arm out and exposing a white shirt sleeve, he cried out to Mr. Chamberlain:

"Tell him what *I* say. Tell him that if he dares to set his dirty foot in this country I'll fight him and his bottle-holders single-handed myself!"

So saying, he flung off his coat into the middle of the gangway, and to the amazement of all and the consternation of those near him, squared up his fists as if he was then and there desirous of tackling M. Constans and bringing him to book in the very presence of the august Chamber.

The reaction had come. Mr. Chamberlain hastily sat down, and the House, in relief after its pent-up excitement, first shrieked with laughter, and then exhausted itself in wild applause.

For the first time in his Parliamentary career Dr. Tanner had violated a strict law of the House and remained unrebuked.

It needed but the moment and it had arrived. The Irish party, standing upon their benches, cheered and cheered to the echo the utterances of their comrade, who, with the feelings of a hero, modestly resumed his seat, half awed by the unusual spectacle of an indulgent House. It was noticed afterwards, as a significant fact, that it was Mr. Chamberlain himself who had succeeded in rousing this splendid burst of patriotism from the Irish members.

But the House quickly regained its ordinary gravity when Mr. Balfour again addressed it. He begged members to consider ways and means. They must not imagine that, however great the surprise, the country was unprepared. Even at that moment the War Office was in close consultation with the Admiralty and with the authorities at the Horse Guards. He asked them, however, to pass a Bill granting the Government fifty million pounds for war purposes, and he suggested that the Bill might be read a third time, and become law that day.

"I am sure I shall meet the approval of the House," he continued, "if I inform it that Her Majesty's Government have lost no time in asking the late leader of the Liberal Party, a statesman whom we all revere, Mr. Gladstone,"—here there were loud cheers from every side of the House—"to join the Council of National Safety. I need not adhere too closely to the forms of the House on such an occasion, and I will at once read the telegram he has dispatched in answer. Mr. Gladstone says:

"I am shocked beyond expression by your news, but I am ready to devote to the service of my country the last few hours that remain to me. I shall indeed be gratified if the scattered remnants of an old man's energy be found still serviceable in a cause so noble as the protection of his native land. This is not merely a battle between England and her

enemies, it is a struggle between order and anarchy, between the principles of peace and the passions of selfishness and envy. This outrageous declaration of war is nothing less than a betrayal of humanity. Let it be England's glory that she takes up the quarrel on behalf of freedom, honour, and prosperity, and earns anew the gratitude of the world. For present purposes, I would suggest the immediate reduction of the interest on Consols to one per cent., under conditions that will protect the poor, as affording the best evidence of the moral force that lies behind our national strength. It is a time for cheerful self-denial. I leave for London by the next train.' "

Mr. Balfour passed on, and informed the House that the Government had resolved to reduce the charges on Consols as recommended, thus freeing their hands for further loans, and had already closed the Stock Exchange to prevent a financial panic. Government brokers would be appointed for the transaction of necessary business. "As an evidence of the gravity of the situation," he added, "I may state that during the progress of this debate I have learned that every British cable has been cut since midday, and our enemies have only left us in telegraphic communication with the United States, as, to cut the Atlantic cable would be an act of war with the American nation."

There was no need for further discussion. Within ten minutes after the reading of the brief Bill which granted the Government fifty millions, it had been passed a third time. Dr. Tanner once more found himself popular by his willingness to disencumber the House of business.

"Let it not be said, sir," he declared, "that Ireland is not willing to make sacrifices at a time of peril. We will withdraw the County of Cork Self-Government Bill for six months, and in saying this, I know that the people of Cork are at my back. [Loud cheers from the Irish benches.] We are the more ready to take this step, sir, because we see before us the prospects of a holy row worthy even of the

best energies of the Irish party. [Laughter and applause.] At such a moment Cork is in the van." [Renewed applause.]

The House rose at five o'clock. In two hours it had received the announcement of war and had made every preparation in its power to meet the enemy. The Briton is, perhaps rightly, accused of being stolid. It is certain that the members of Parliament left Westminster with as much *sang-froid* as if they had just given their sanction to a new railway bill, or had resolved to add a shilling to the dog-tax.

But the news had long since spread through London and been flashed to the remotest districts of the United Kingdom. The public at first received the thrilling intelligence with incredulity, but as their doubts were dispersed, an intense desire to be up and doing made itself felt throughout the country and in the Metropolis. Business in London was at a standstill. The streets were crowded with what, at another time, might be regarded as a mob, but was now clearly recognisable as a national gathering animated with one thought, one purpose, one enthusiasm.

There needed some outlet for the high-wrought feeling that prevailed. It was fortunately provided by the statement that Her Majesty the Queen had left Windsor, and was on her way to Buckingham Palace to take up her residence in the Capital during the time of war, so as to be near her people and her Ministers.

There was a mighty rush of the excited multitude to Hyde Park, and as the Queen passed through in an open carriage, though the days were still cold, a wild, vociferous tumult of inextinguishable cheering rose from the vast throng. It was a nation voicing its own patriotism to its visible head.

When Her Majesty reached the Palace, the Mall and Buckingham Palace Road were crammed tumultuously. Distinctions of rank had faded with differences of political conviction, and, without waiting for solicitation, the Queen

appeared upon the balcony leaning on the arm of her eldest son. There she remained several minutes, firm, proud, and erect, whilst her people raised cheer after cheer to assure her of their confidence, their loyalty, and their invincible courage.

The enthusiasm of the citizens of London was no idle boast, for in that memorable hour the citizen army of England was giving its heart's blood for the defence of the country.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MAJOR PERKINS WON THE V. C.

AT five o'clock that afternoon, Wednesday, May 3d, 1898, the chief coast-guard officer at Worthing telegraphed to London, Portsmouth, and Dover: "A vast fleet of ships-of-the-line, apparently French and German, are standing in for the shore. They are now about ten miles out at sea, S.W. by S."

Half-an-hour later he wired again: "Fleet distant five miles. Advancing in four lines abreast. Six cables' length between each line. Outer lines thirty-six armour-clads. Inner lines forty troopers, Messageries Maritimes, and North German Lloyd steamers. Big flotilla of gunboats and torpedo boats ten miles out. Possibly one hundred. Weather calm."

At 6.15 p.m. he sent this message: "Presume this is enemy announced by telegraph from London. Fleet anchored in same formation two miles out. Troopships and liners crowded with troops. Have counted 109 smaller craft. Preparations for landing being made. What shall I do?"

To which the answer was given: "Go to telephone office. Wire is switched on to Horse Guards. Send constant advice of progress of events."

And the first message which was received by Lord Wolseley at the Horse Guards was to the following effect: "A number of flat-bottomed boats, or floats, each containing some two hundred men, have put off from the troopers, and the Volunteers are lining the beach."

The Commander-in-Chief could not help smiling as an

aide-de-camp repeated the concluding words to him, but anxious lines appeared in his face as he glanced at his watch, and saw it was only five minutes past seven.

"I hope the Brighton and South-coast people have kept their word, Brabazon," he said to a staff officer who was standing near the fireplace.

"Well, sir, the traffic-manager meant what he said," was the reply. "I heard him tell the driver of the first train, which left Victoria with the Guards at 6.10, that if he got to Worthing within the hour he drew £50 to-morrow, but if he did n't he got the sack."

"What is the exact disposition at this moment?"

"Fourteen South-Western trains, each containing one thousand men, were ready at Aldershot at 5.30, waiting our telephonic orders, and they have since left at regular intervals of five minutes between each, the first starting at 6 p.m. The London, Brighton, and South Coast Company are dispatching trains with regulars and volunteers from Victoria, London Bridge, and Clapham Junction as fast as they can fill them. By eight o'clock we should have ten thousand men there, by nine o'clock twenty, and in the early hours of the morning seventy, with two hundred guns."

"I think we estimated that fifty Maxims would be in position on the sea front by 7.30 p.m.?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well," said the Commander-in-Chief, "we can now look into the Commissariat and field transport arrangements. Every man has a day's cooked rations with him, but we must be prepared for developments at that particular locality, although I fail to see how the enemy can possibly effect a landing if the fleet creates a timely diversion."

At that moment the Channel Squadron, under the command of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, was steaming east from Spithead at the rate of ten knots per hour. The Admiral's pennant was hoisted on board the *Magnificent*, whilst the other vessels under his command were the *Royal Sov-*

ereign, *Blenheim*, *Empress of India*, *Endymion*, *Repulse*, *Resolution*, *Achilles*, and *Agamemnon*. These, with twenty-two torpedo boats and the gunboat *Speedy*, were all the available force at his disposal for immediate action, so skilfully had the enemy planned the time and manner of his attack upon our shores.

With the exception of one, or possibly three, the most powerful ships in our Navy were in the Mediterranean, in China, in North America, in Australasia, at the Cape—anywhere on the face of the broad waters save in the English Channel. Lord Charles Beresford had received by semaphore the second of the coast-guard's telegrams before he gave the signal for departure, and he knew that he had nine warships to oppose thirty-six of equal or superior class, whilst he realised that the proportion of the enemy's smaller craft to those under his command was equally appalling in the mere point of view of numbers.

But of hesitation or doubt in his actions or in his heart there was none. No sooner was the fleet under way than another signal was made from the Admiral's ship, and when the words "Remember Nelson" were deciphered, even the strict discipline of the British Navy could not prevent a great cheer bursting forth from every ship in the line.

These things were noted by the anxious watchers on the shore, and when Sir Evelyn Wood arrived at Worthing at 7.30 p.m. to take command of the defending forces, he found a telegram awaiting him from Lord Wolseley to inform him that naval assistance might be expected shortly after eleven o'clock. The Admiralty officials who made this calculation could not, of course, know what Lord Charles Beresford's exact plans were, but of one thing they were quite certain—he would attack the enemy as soon as ever he could reach them.

When the combined French and German fleets first hove in sight, the quiet little town of Worthing was naturally thrown into a state of intense excitement. The head constable informed the Mayor, and the Mayor sought the advice

of the Town Clerk, who recommended that the fire-bell should be rung. This was promptly done, with the result that in ten minutes every soul in Worthing knew that the town was likely to be bombarded forthwith. The man in charge of the fire-engine got steam up—evidently labouring under the impression that he must do something—and in the result he had his salary increased for the act, as the first shell from the enemy's flagship struck and fired the Town Hall, which must inevitably have been burned down but for the prompt arrival of the engine.

The local volunteers, to the number of 211, spontaneously gathered with their arms and accoutrements in the principal thoroughfare, and the resident major, a most worthy and stout linen-draper, placed himself at their head, mounted upon a horse that served admirably for the dual purpose of parade and parcels delivery.

He was busy behind his counter when the strange tidings of imminent invasion reached him. His cheek blanched and his heart beat tumultuously when he rushed upstairs to tell his wife, and that good lady suggested the immediate closing of the shop and a hasty retreat to her father's residence in the country.

But the major was stout of heart as of body. In a state of high nervous exaltation he sought for his sword and cross-belts, saying, as he donned them: "No, Margaret; my place is here. It will be a poor day for England when the first Volunteer officer who is called upon to do his duty flinches from the consequences. Kiss me, my dear. I cannot bear to meet the children, but, God willing, we will all come together again in peace and happiness." And he hurried forth to see to the secure girthing of his horse.

Fortunately there was a very large supply of ammunition on hand with the sergeant-instructor, as the corps was engaged upon its annual target practice, and the men rapidly stuffed their pockets with cartridges until they had over one hundred rounds each.

Then they fell in, in two companies, and the major, Perkins by name, thought it his duty to make a speech, as the circumstances were such as did not, to his knowledge, come within the purview of the Volunteer Regulations.

"Comrades," he said, "our worthy Mayor has informed me that war has been declared against us by France and Germany, and we now know that Worthing has been singled out for attack. Whoa, boy, whoa, there," for a shell screamed through the air, passed into the Council Chamber of the Town Hall and burst there with a terrific report, and the Major's mount was tolerably fresh, as Saturday was his hardest day. The Major managed to return his sword, observing *sotto voce*: "I never *can* sit a horse with a drawn sword in my hand," and continued aloud: "These Frenchmen and Germans are here in their hundreds of thousands, and they do not demand ransom from Worthing, but seek to destroy our town at once. They are worse than highway robbers, as they ask for both our money and our lives. It is our duty, comrades, to resist them to death." [Loud cheers from the crowd, an interlude which the drill-instructor utilised to squint down the front rank of one company to see if the dressing was all right.] "I am not much good at tactics myself," went on Major Perkins, "but I know what to do here. We must line the shore and let no d——d foreigner set a foot on English soil until he steps over our dead bodies. Companies, form fours—left. By your right, quick march!"

Arrived on the Marine Parade, the Major and his little host found that six of the enemy's battle-ships had approached to within a mile and a half of low-water mark. They were on the western side of the pier, which they scrupulously refrained from damaging by their subsequent fire, as they expected to find it extremely useful when the active work of disembarkation began. An occasional shot was leisurely fired at the town, not so much by way of serious bombardment as to demonstrate that they were in earnest and would stand no nonsense.

The plan of the allies was now quite apparent. It was their intention to rapidly land sufficient troops and machine guns to hold the outlying portions of Worthing against any possible counter demonstration by the British, until three complete army corps, numbering 150,000 men all told, were concentrated in the locality. This number of troops actually accompanied the expedition.

They carried a fortnight's stores with them, and by the time a forward movement on London could be undertaken the French and German commanders estimated that reinforcements of three times the number of the expeditionary force would be at hand, whilst their fighting power would be enormously enhanced by the arrival of a vast quantity of stores and field ordnance.

Major Perkins extended his men on the beach in single rank with two paces interval. He told them to lie down, to sight their rifles at 400 yards, to aim low, and to concentrate their power, by order of their section commanders, on particular boats. These dispositions were hardly made before half-a-dozen launches appeared from the seaward side of the six warships, and rapidly steamed, or were rowed, towards the shore, in such fashion as led the onlookers to believe that the occupants expected no resistance.

They were soon bitterly undeceived. Volunteers are, as a rule, excellent marksmen, and bullets poured into the advancing boats at such a rate that the commander of the enemy's advance guard thought it best to retire until the sea front had been vigorously shelled by the battle-ships.

At this momentary repulse of the enemy the little defending force set up a great yell of delight, and the stout Major rode up and down the shingle inciting his men to keep up the reputation of Worthing, as though the quiet little watering-place was accustomed to similar murderous proceedings as part of the season's routine.

So far not an Englishman had been injured, as the fire from the troops in the floats had been uncertain and ineffec-

tual. But now the game was to assume a more desperate character. A perfect tornado of shells swept the sea-front, wrecking every house facing the Channel, and killing and wounding a great number of people of all ages and both sexes whose curiosity had caused them to watch the progress of events rather than seek safety in flight.

Special attempts were made by the enemy to clear the beach of the unexpected line of defence which had proved its powers so unpleasantly, but it was far from easy to hit men lying down at the water's edge, and the only real living target was the Major on his horse. Both man and animal were in a perfect frenzy of excitement, and appeared to have charmed lives. More than once a time-fuse shrapnel burst right in front of them, but the zone of fire covered by the missiles in the shell left the space around them inviolate, and although appealed to by his subordinate officers to dismount, the Major would not listen to the suggestion.

From his elevated position he could see that a very much larger number of flat-bottomed boats and launches were now gathered behind the ironclads, and when the cannonading ceased something like 2000 troops were swiftly ferried towards the shore, with the evident determination to make good their landing this time. Whilst a few of the flotilla made straight for the beach the majority headed towards the pier and the *feu d'enfer* kept up between the belligerents on the sea-shore prevented the defenders from noting the undisturbed occupation of the pier-head by the enemy.

A volley from the leading boat brought down Major Perkins and his charger, but the Major arose from a cloud of dust, drew his sword, and shrieked in a shrill falsetto, for his natural voice had gone long since: "I'm not dead yet, lads. Give it to 'em."

But the end was seemingly close at hand.

More than half of the Worthing volunteers were killed or wounded, and the survivors were now firing blindly and ineffectively, being mad with the battle fever, and dazed with

the singing of bullets and the smash of the projectiles against the stones on the beach.

Already some hundreds of Frenchmen had gained the platform of the pier and were forming up to advance into the town, whilst the leading launch was within a few feet of ramming her nose into the gravel beach, when the Major devoted all his remaining energies to one last yell:

“Fix bayonets! Centre close! Double!” and he jumped into the surf, brandishing his sword like a maniac. A big German officer leapt from the bow of the boat to meet him, but his heel turned on an uneven boulder, his lunge missed, and the Major hit him such a hearty whack on his steel *pickelhaube* with the flat of his sword that the German fell stunned into the sea, and was quietly but speedily drowned.

But now a fierce roar of many voices came from behind the straggling group of volunteers. Ere anyone had realised what was happening, two companies of the Grenadier Guards flung themselves into three of the enemy's launches and gutted them with the bayonet as terriers might clear out rats under like conditions.

Two more companies deployed to left and right of the pier on the Marine Parade, and poured a hailstorm of lead into the advancing French column and their comrades in the boats, and, when the ornamental ironwork gates at the entrance of the pier had been smashed down, a couple of Maxims were run into position, with the result that the enemy dropped like swathes of grass before the sweep of a scythe.

A second time had the attack failed, utterly and disastrously.

Sir Evelyn Wood had now arrived and assumed control of affairs. The 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards had been conveyed from Victoria to Worthing, fifty-nine and a half miles, in fifty-eight minutes, and one of the Tommies accurately expressed the feelings of himself and his comrades when he said subsequently that he would sooner “stand and be blazed at for a month of Sundays by

forty thousand bloomin' Frenchmen than do that little trick again."

The driver of the train described the journey as "a toss-up between fifty quid and Kingdom Come," while the guard, a sober, steady man, was responsible for the statement that he only once in his life wished he was drunk—"when we was crossin' them facin' points at Keymer Junction."

Five minutes later the General and staff, with the 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, better known as the 60th, reached the station from Aldershot. Sir Evelyn Wood, by galloping bareback on a cab-horse to the parade, gained the scene of action in time to witness Major Perkins's last gallant attempt to hurl back the tide of invasion.

During the momentary lull that followed the retreat of the second flotilla, he sent for the Major and said: "If we are both alive to-morrow I shall recommend you for the Victoria Cross, and shall ask the Commander-in-Chief to gazette you as a full Colonel in Her Majesty's regular forces. You have behaved most gallantly."

But Perkins could make no answer. He had quite lost his voice. He bowed respectfully, and two great tears coursed down his cheeks.

Twelve-pounders, machine guns, and relays of troops, were now pouring through the town from the station, and night had commenced to close in. It took the discomfited enemy some time to gain the shelter of the warship's guns, and the General seized the welcome respite to plant the Maxims and field artillery on the shingle, whilst he ordered the lamps on the parade to be lighted in order to mislead the enemy's gunners. Electric search-lights lit up the scene from the ironclads, many buildings in the town were in flames, and when the shell-fire recommenced it was seen that the men-of-war had widened their intervals considerably in order to concentrate their fire-zone, and several gunboats had approached much nearer the shore than the big ships dared to venture, pouring in a perfectly demoniacal hail of lead.

Considering its volume and intensity, it did not do such wholesale damage to the defenders as might have been expected. The low position of our artillery and Maxims, added to the uncertainty of the electric beams, brilliant though they were, served to disconcert the aim of the gunners, who were themselves the object of a terrific fire belching forth from a very wide expanse of the sea-shore.

The British losses were heavy, but they were more than made up by the constant accessions of strength in guns, men, and ammunition. The station-master afterwards received a decoration from the Queen for the cool-headed way in which he kept his station clear of empty trains, using both platforms and good sidings for debarkation, and returning the empties along the up and down lines respectively towards Brighton and Goring.

At ten o'clock another attempt to effect a landing was made, but the reception given was so warm that the attacking boats were never closer than three hundred yards from the beach. Sir Evelyn Wood took advantage of the retreating tide to move his guns and men lower down and thus again upset the enemy's range.

This third failure induced a further change of tactics on the part of the combined squadron. The fire on both sides slackened off until near eleven o'clock, when the ball was again opened by twenty ironclads, and something like sixty gunboats and torpedo boats. The smaller craft boldly steamed in until they were barely two cables' length from the shore, and forthwith a murderous fire of shrapnel and small arms rained upon the defenders. The reply on our side was undaunted, but it naturally became more uncertain. Every second man in the fighting line was hit in a few minutes, guns were dismounted, Maxims smashed into fragments, and stones and *débris* hurled in showers over the whole of the Parade.

The General did not dare to weaken his extended front by withdrawing the men to seek shelter, as it was evident that

a tremendous attack would shortly be delivered from the numerous flotilla of boats now gathering behind the vessels.

Fiercer and fiercer grew the fusillade, shells hurled through the air screaming like lost spirits, bullets clanged in masses against the ruined houses, and some ten thousand troops crowded into an innumerable company of boats of all shapes and sizes, were about to make a determined dash for the shore, when a sudden outburst of big guns from the sea, a series of tremendous crashes and explosions, and a rapid diversion of the electric search-lights towards the south, caused an immediate cessation of fire from both parties.

The British Fleet had arrived upon the scene.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE FLEET DID.

AT eight bells in the second dog-watch, the lookout on board the *Magnificent* announced the hour in a stentorian voice. In non-nautical phrase it may be stated that at eight o'clock p.m. the Channel Squadron and its attendant torpedo boats were some six miles off the coast in the neighbourhood of Selsey Bill with a clear sky and smooth sea, and everything in order in the disposition of the fleet.

On board each vessel there was the utmost activity, and, to a landsman, the most hopeless disorder would have seemed to prevail. The ships had been put into fighting rig hours earlier, but still there remained much to do in the shape of finally testing steam-pumps and hydraulic machinery to see that everything was in working order. Ammunition had to be drawn from the magazines, and placed in proper positions for use, water-tight doors in protective bulkheads needed careful examination, appliances for extinguishing fires required overhauling, and, last but not least, the cooks were busy in preparing a solid meal for all hands, as a useful preparation for the labour of the night.

Jack's personal arrangements were soon made. If his occupation kept him below deck he divested himself of blouse, shirt, boots, and socks, belted his trousers tightly round his waist, and chewed a contemplative quid as he set himself to the manifold tasks which still lay between him and supper—for the British tar loves to go into a fight half-naked, as did his progenitor of the days of Trafalgar and the Nile.

Shortly after one bell in the first watch, that is to say, a

little after 8.30 p.m., the Admiral signalled half-speed, and called all captains of ironclads and commanders of smaller vessels on board the flagship. They were soon assembled in the wardroom, as the Admiral's quarters were too small to accommodate so many officers, and were, moreover, being adapted to the requirements of additional hospital space.

Lord Charles Beresford explained that he had brought them together in order that each officer should clearly understand not only his own duties but the general plan of attack, and it would be the duty of commanders individually, through their subordinates, to make the principles of his intentions known to every member of each ship's company.

"I take it, gentlemen," he went on, "that few of us, if any, will survive this affair, as we are hopelessly outnumbered. But it is our glorious privilege to do all that lies in our power to injure the enemy before we lose our lives or our ships."

"I have asked myself how we can best serve our country at this juncture, and it appears to me that we should endeavour to destroy the French and German transports and thus lighten the labour of the army in resisting any attempt at invasion. You all know the disposition of the allied fleets as outlined in the last message signalled from Gosport, and I have no doubt that a similar formation has been preserved in anchorage. Some of the enemy's ironclads and a considerable number of their gunboats will have ranged themselves broadside to the beach to shell the town and defending forces, whilst the attention of the remainder will be keenly directed towards the efforts of the troops to effect a landing.

"There is no moon, and if I mistake not, a fresh breeze from the sea, and the clouds coming with it, together with the noise and excitement of the bombardment, will render it comparatively easy for us to approach unobserved, as a sharp look out to the south is hardly to be expected under the conditions. If they expect a naval attack from any quarter it will be from either east or west.

“ That being so, I purpose making a detour and striking in from the southward. Battle-ships will form in two divisions, the *Magnificent* leading the starboard and the *Resolution* the port attack. Torpedo boats will follow in the same formation until the moment of impact with the enemy. It is probable that the enemy’s gunboats and torpedo boats will be present in considerable numbers on the weather-side of the fleet, but it will be the duty of the two divisions of battle-ships to smash right through them, depending upon rams and quick-firing guns only.

“ It will be the object of both divisions to intervene between the enemy’s battle-ships and his transports, and to screen our torpedo boats by endeavouring to draw the enemy’s fire upon themselves. The torpedo boats on reaching the fighting line will incline inwards, the leading pair endeavouring to sink the first two of the enemy’s transports. The second pair of torpedo boats will pass the first, and attack the next transports in the line, and this manœuvre must be repeated by the whole twenty-two boats, each one rigidly directing all efforts towards the single object in view, namely, the destruction of the enemy’s land forces and *matériel*.

“ When this task has been accomplished, gentlemen, I leave you to your individual devices to do the utmost amount of damage in your power to the enemy’s fleet, and when you find your vessels in danger of sinking, you should endeavour to run them ashore to save the lives of the remnants of your ship’s companies. The sole alternative to this course is to go down whilst destroying an opponent.”

There was silence for a moment when his lordship finished speaking. Then the commander of the gunboat *Speedy* said: “ I presume, sir, that I take on as many of the enemy’s smaller fry as I can gather round me ? ”

“ No, Commander Hardinge, I am sorry to say I cannot meet your views in that way,” replied the Admiral with a smile. “ It will be your business to send round a launch in an hour’s time to collect private letters from the fleet—oppor-

tunities will meanwhile be given for writing them so far as is practicable—and you will then observe operations from a safe distance, subsequently sailing off to Portsmouth or Dover, as you may think fit, and reporting to the Admiralty all that has happened.”

The officer thus addressed turned scarlet with indignation.

“Do I understand you, sir,” he said passionately, “that the *Speedy* is to be turned into a post-office, and that I and my crew——”

“Commander Hardinge, silence!” said Lord Beresford. “Obey my orders, or, by God, I’ll court-martial you in the next world!”

After this explosion the Admiral calmed down a little and explained, in kindlier tones that the *Speedy* was doing absolutely necessary, if disagreeable, service, as the Admiralty must be placed in possession of the facts, there being no certainty of survivors reaching the shore, or of events being correctly observed from that quarter.

“And now, gentlemen,” he concluded, addressing the entire gathering, “I have only to say that all external lights must, under every circumstance, be extinguished, the best efforts being made to preserve correct distances. Fresh orders, if indispensable, will be made by trumpet-call from the flagship and repeated down both lines. It remains for me to insist upon the need of every man in the fleet understanding the plan and object of the attack, and to wish you all good-bye and God-speed.”

The officers silently saluted and trooped out of the ward-room. Hardinge observed in a sarcastic undertone to Captain Blake of the *Repulse*: “This is a jolly fine arrangement for me, is n’t it?”

“Well, you see, old chap,” began the other sympathetically, but Hardinge growled:

“Oh, yes, I see well enough. Anyhow, he left me to decide what ‘a safe distance’ means.”

By nine o’clock the squadron was steaming at full speed

again, and the course was altered a point or two towards the south.

True to the Admiral's anticipations, a stiffish breeze from the Atlantic put a curl on the waves and promised to bring up a choppy sea next tide. Some light cirrus-clouds spread themselves over the sky, dimming the stars, and lending obscurity to the horizon. Confusion had now given place to perfect order on board each ship in the fleet.

By the Admiral's instructions an extra ration of grog was served out all round, and general permission to smoke was given, as he felt that the exceptional circumstances of the case justified this departure from strict naval custom. He would gladly have sanctioned the use of the ships' bands too, were it not for the fear of being detected. As a matter of fact, the French torpedo-catcher, *L'Etoile*, did unknowingly pass the squadron, about half-past ten o'clock at some two miles distance, being then on her way to Brest to announce in grandiloquent terms the occupation of Worthing by the allies, as General de Rosny thought the attack was practically over when the Frenchmen had once gained the pier !

The mere fact that they had been promptly swept off it, only served to assure him that in the more determined effort being made whilst he wrote his dispatch they would be successful. Besides, the Paris morning papers must be able to state that perfidious Albion was in the grasp of the combined forces.

On through the night steamed the silent and ghost-like fleet, noiseless, save for the throbbing of the screws, which was hardly discernible in the sighing wind, weirdly indistinct in the unrelieved gloom, seeming like some procession of terrible and gigantic spirits of the deep passing swiftly over the waters to avenge the wrong being done to the Queen of the Seas.

At last the course was abruptly altered by a wheel to the north, and half-an-hour later the lookout in the foretop of

the *Magnificent* reported the flashes of gun-fire and the steadier glare of burning houses right ahead.

The nervous tension throughout the fleet now became almost unendurable.

"Bust me if I can stand this 'ere waiting," said No. 1 of the forward barbette 12-in. 46-ton gun confidentially to his butt, No. 3, and he hummed: "Oh, would I were a bird, that I might fly to thee."

"You 'll be there soon enough, Jim," said the other. "I wonder which way we 'll go, up, or down, or in pieces?"

"Stop that talking there, or I 'll report you after the action," said a warrant officer sternly.

"Who to, Nosey?" said a voice. "To Old Nick?"

At this sally there was a general snigger, in which the lieutenant in charge of the barbette joined.

Every man in the fleet knew that he was going to practically certain death, but that was of slight import—delay alone was irksome.

The progress of events on shore was now easily distinguishable, and Lord Beresford's face became brighter than it had been for some time when he found that the enemy had not yet effected a lodgment. The allied fleet was plainly silhouetted against the glaring background of light, and the Admiral, who knew every ship in the French navy by sight, said to the captain of the *Magnificent*: "We are in luck, Drysdale. The farthest vessel in the enemy's starboard line is *La Gloire*, the French flagship. She is just about our fighting weight, and we must endeavour to reach her, if possible."

Astonishing as it may seem, the foremost ships of the British fleet had crashed through the outer fringe of gun-boats, sinking four of them outright and crippling several others, before their presence was observed by the enemy's battle-ships. The majority of these were swinging to their cables, at the moment of attack, and were consequently in the worst possible position for using their guns, and no

sooner had the English ships entered their opponents' lines than they commenced firing with tremendous energy and precision.

In less than two minutes every ship was hotly engaged, and the fight became the fiercest ever known in the history of naval warfare. Never before had such vessels or projectiles been used under such conditions. The noise of the battle was plainly heard at Chichester, Arundel, Horsham, and other towns even more remote from the scene of action.

The surprise was complete. This gave the attacking fleet a very considerable advantage, so they succeeded in cutting off the transports from the ironclads before the latter could make an effort to get under way.

It was only when the British torpedo boats commenced their career of destruction among the crowded troopships and liners that the allied fleets perceived the frightful predicament in which they were placed, and how their fire was being drawn by the battle-ships to permit complete destruction of the invading force. Throwing every other consideration to the winds, they then endeavoured, by closing in, and concentrating their fire, to sink the torpedo boats by sheer weight of metal. But it was too late. Even where they succeeded in their object they as often as not had done quite as fatal damage to one of their own unarmoured vessels by misdirected shots, as a *Messageries Maritimes* or North German Lloyd steamer sank like a cracked teapot when struck between wind and water by a shell from a 10-in. or 12-in. gun.

Although the British torpedo boats were literally swept with showers of lead from the troops on board each transport, they grimly persisted in their work of death. Ship after ship was blown up and sunk, the terrible crash of the torpedo attack passing into the roar of a second explosion as the water reached the furnaces. It was a fearful scene of death and disaster. Men were thrown into the water by tens of thousands only to be engulfed in the maelstrom caused by some sinking ship, to be smothered by the ever-rising waves,

or to be crushed into mangled atoms by the swift torpedo-catchers and gunboats darting in from all quarters to the rescue.

Incredible as it may seem, not a transport or cargo-ship was left in the allied fleet. In those few minutes of wholesale holocaust and carnage, 120,000 Frenchmen and Germans, with a fabulous quantity of cannon and munitions of war, had been swept away into the deep waters of the English Channel.

Lord Charles Beresford, perceiving that his appointed task had been accomplished with a success beyond his wildest hopes, now devoted himself to the comparatively simple task of selling the lives of himself and his men as dearly as might be. Rapidly changing his tactics, he rammed a second-class French cruiser which was crossing his bows, and split her in twain as though she were a rotten stick. This left the path open towards *La Gloire*.

Imitating his example the other ironclads entered into a general action all round. Numbers and weight of metal of course now began to tell, and in fifteen minutes all that was left of the British Fleet was one battle-ship stranded on Worthing beach, and the dispatch vessel *Speedy*, which was hurrying off to Portsmouth with her bows smashed in, with a bullet through the fleshy part of her commander's left forearm, and a broad grin on the face of that worthy officer, who seemed to have completely recovered his good temper.

But the British Fleet had gone down in good company. The eight ships of war were accompanied by seventeen of their enemies, whilst the twenty-two torpedo boats had accounted for all of the allies' transports and thirty-one of their own size. And the shattered remnant of this new Armada made off from this unequal contest, steaming slowly through the night to Brest and Bremerhaven, with rage and shame in their hearts, and sore wounds in the bodies of both ships and men.

In a word, the destruction of the English fleet had en-

tailed the most terrible and crushing disaster that the enemy could have encountered.

Meanwhile, how came the *Speedy* and her commander to stand in such urgent need of repairs?

When Beresford ranged up alongside of *La Gloire* he contrived to give that redoubtable battle-ship such a warm salute that she rapidly presented almost as damaged an appearance as did the *Magnificent*, notwithstanding the previous experiences of the latter vessel. An artillery-duel at pistol-shot distance between two such monsters must mean the utter annihilation of one or the other in a very few minutes, and, to make sure of the result, the German flagship *Fürst Bismarck* proceeded to cross the bows of the *Magnificent*, pouring in her broadside as she did so. As a last expiring effort the *Magnificent*, whose engines were intact, although she was perceptibly in a sinking condition, rammed the *Fürst Bismarck* with such hearty good-will that the lesser German vessel forthwith heeled over and sank. The *Magnificent* quivered and staggered from the effects of the blow, and for a little while her steam-steering gear was thrown out of order.

The incident was taken advantage of by *La Gloire*. She started upon a sixteen-points curve which must have brought her steel-shafted nose into the quarter of the British ship, but now the diminutive but irrepressible *Speedy* appeared upon the scene.

When subsequently threatened with a court-martial for disobeying orders, Commander Hardinge explained to Lord Charles Beresford that owing to the smoke and confusion it was impossible for him to learn what had happened unless he ventured right into the midst of the combatants, and at that identical moment, seeing the predicament of the Admiral's ship, he felt bound to interfere, so long as he ran no great risk himself. At which the Admiral laughed contentedly, for he had, on the previous day recommended Hardinge for the command of a new cruiser fitting out at Milford Haven.

But to resume. Hardinge realised the desperate plight of the *Magnificent*, and was for a second half mad with his own comparative helplessness. Suddenly an inspiration seized him, and he ran his little vessel at full speed ahead, into the stern of the French ship. By this trick, the object of which was not perceived until it had been accomplished, he smashed both the rudder and the propeller-blades of the ironclad, which drifted away powerless on the tide, to cross the path of the sinking torpedo boat *Alert*, and to be blown up by the last Whitehead torpedo discharged from its tubes. In fact the tiny assailant was the first to go down.

Lord Beresford saw the whole incident, and was commenting on it to Captain Drysdale when a splinter from a random shell knocked him senseless. The commander of the *Magnificent* then turned the vessel's head to the shore, where he succeeded in beaching her at low-water mark. She was drawing five feet more than her wonted depth of water, and must have sunk in another couple of minutes after the time she ran ashore.

A few officers and men from other ships managed to save their lives by swimming to deserted or overturned boats, and some were picked up clinging to wreckage hours afterwards by search parties of fishermen, who proceeded from Worthing to the scene of battle.

The incoming tide cast up a ghastly legacy of the fight in the shape of hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses. It was in this guise, and in no other, that the army corps of France and Germany effected a landing upon British soil.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE AND THE PEOPLE.

ENGLAND was in a wild ferment of joy on the following day. From all parts of the kingdom came accounts of special thanksgiving services in the churches and chapels, and of hastily convened meetings of Corporations, to give representative assurances to Her Majesty the Queen, and to the Government of enthusiastic loyalty, and ungrudging support, no matter what might be the trials in store for the nation.

An hour before Mr. Balfour had made his great speech in the House of Commons, the Adjutant-General had issued telegraphic orders for the calling out of the first-class army reserve, and the mobilisation of the Militia and Volunteers. Regimental districts had been hard at work all night in making the necessary preparations, and the consequence was that when every man in the United Kingdom learnt in the daily papers of the dispersal of the allied fleet, he also became aware that his services were needed if he had ever borne arms.

The result was most gratifying to the authorities.

From every military centre came intelligence of men flocking to headquarters before the official notice demanding their presence had reached them, and in one instance, that of the 19th Regimental District, at Richmond, in Yorkshire, no less than eighty per cent. of the Army Reserve had rejoined the colours before Thursday evening. It may be remarked, in passing, that when the roll was called a few days later, prior to drafting off the troops to their regiments, it was

found that in this locality, which was typical of most other places, the magnificent total of ninety-seven per cent. of effectives had been reached.

At Manchester and Birmingham the volunteer battalions set a splendid example to their comrades elsewhere by unanimously deciding to place themselves at the disposal of the Government for service abroad, whilst in Ireland, where there are no volunteers, some amazement was created at Dublin Castle by an offer from the Mill Street district of Cork to supply a complete regiment of *armed* patriots. Scotland rose to a man, and the Welsh miners promised to supply the fleet with enough coal for a year and then take their places in the ranks.

The London public enthusiasm was greatly stimulated by a grand review held in Hyde Park before the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke of York, and the Duke of Connaught.

The parade was for inspection purposes rather than for the practice of manœuvres. In fact, it would have been impossible for any general to move his troops to any extent over the Park, owing to the dense crowd of citizens of London which on all sides surrounded the battalions now drawn up in line.

Sir Redvers Buller was in command, and it was noticed that after the troops had gone through a few movements in the manual and firing exercise, a communication made to him by the Prince of Wales caused General Buller so to dispose the line that the troops were massed in a hollow square, of which the open side was occupied by the carriages of the Royal party. When the necessary quarter-column formation for this change had been effected, the Prince of Wales left his carriage, mounted a charger, and moved forward in front of the brilliant staff by which he was surrounded. It was quickly seen that he was about to address the gathering.

Such an unprecedented incident appealed so strongly to the dramatic unities of the moment, that a marvellous silence fell upon the thousands of people who witnessed it.

In a strong, firm, and evenly-balanced voice, which reached to a very considerable distance, His Royal Highness then spoke as follows :

“ Sir Redvers Buller and officers and men of the Garrison of London, in addressing you briefly to-day I depart from established custom in order to utilise this favourable opportunity of conveying to you, and through you to the people of the British Empire all the world over, the sentiments of Her Majesty the Queen at this supremest hour in the history of Britain. Her Majesty charges me to say that she recognises with a delight intensified by life-long conviction, the indomitable faith and loyalty which characterise the English-speaking people at a moment when such qualities are in the most urgent demand.

“ The tremendous nature of the struggle into which we are forced by the action of two great countries, but yesterday deemed our friends, is as well known to Her Majesty the Queen as to her subjects. Her Majesty is beyond all things gratified to perceive that in this hour of stress and terrible danger, her people are as steadfast to themselves, as true to their convictions, as faithful to the traditions of their forefathers, as Her Majesty has ever believed and has ever known them to be in times of difficulty or peril.”

His Royal Highness paused for a moment, and a low murmur of applause and of keen appreciation swept through the multitude, which would not cheer so that not a word of the speech might be lost.

With even greater vigour of voice and animation of gesture the Prince of Wales continued :

“ The dispositions made by the authorities for the defence of England against invasion and the protection of our highway through the world,—the sea—will be made known to you as rapidly as circumstances may permit. Meanwhile I am enabled by the courtesy of the Commander-in-Chief to acquaint you with the fact that preparations are now being rapidly pushed towards completion for the purpose of landing



THE PRINCE OF WALES REVIEWS THE TROOPS IN HYDE PARK.

two strong expeditionary forces on the shores of France and Germany."

At this announcement a tremendous outburst of cheers came from the crowd, and, if the truth must be told, the assembled soldiers were as ready to join in the demonstration as anybody else, whilst their officers were themselves too keenly interested in the momentous statements made by the Prince of Wales to take any definite steps towards checking such an unwonted military solecism as cheering in the ranks.

After an interval of some minutes' duration order was sufficiently restored to enable the Prince of Wales to proceed.

"It is only," he said, "in consequence of the urgent recommendations of Her Majesty's Ministers that I have been restrained from taking my place in some responsible position with one or other of these army corps. For reasons of State, however, it is felt to be imperatively necessary that I should remain in England. No such galling if needful restrictions are imposed upon my son, the Duke of York, and my brother, the Duke of Connaught, and both these direct representatives of Her Majesty will fill their fitting positions as English princes at the head of British troops fighting for their beloved country."

Another great wave of emotion passed over the crowd. Men yelled themselves almost into a frenzy of excitement, women wept hysterically, some fainted, and the onlooker, unconscious of the cause of this high nervous tension, might have fancied himself in the Bois de Boulogne rather than in staid and orderly Hyde Park.

"And now," said His Royal Highness in conclusion, "there remains for me to say to you all: 'Be of good cheer.' I believe that we shall emerge from this struggle a greater, grander, and more powerful nation than we have gone into it, if that be possible. Whatever of effort, whatever of self-denial, may be necessary, will be given by all of us, from Her Majesty the Queen down to her least significant subject. In this matter we are a united and determined

people, and I have yet to learn that there is any combination of armed force existing in this world which cannot be swept out of the path of Britain when she is aroused. Again, I wish you all God-speed."

With this His Royal Highness waved his hand to the people and the troops, and there came back to him the appreciative cheers of thousands upon thousands of voices.

The Royal party now made preparations for returning to St. James's, and the Prince again seated himself by the side of the Princess. They proceeded very slowly through the Park, acknowledging cordially the vociferous acclamations from the living lines of people through which their carriage slowly forged its way.

Turning out of the Park at Hyde Park Corner, the escort and vehicles were about to move off at a more rapid pace, when suddenly a man sprang from the crowd, dodged a policeman and mounted life-guardsmen who endeavoured to intercept him, and jumped on to the step of the carriage in which the Prince and Princess of Wales were seated.

With a look of intense entreaty in his eyes, he said to the Prince, speaking with desperate earnestness: "Will Your Royal Highness hear me for a moment?"

Although naturally startled by the incident, the Prince of Wales was quick to prevent two members of his escort from cutting down the daring intruder, as he perceived in a glance that the man had no evil intentions in thus abruptly thrusting himself forward.

"What do you want?" he said to the stranger, who still clung desperately to the side of the carriage.

"I am an inventor, Your Highness," was the answer, "and I have discovered a weapon which can be rapidly turned to account, and which I believe will be sufficient in itself to save England even in the face of the odds against her. I am a poor man and of no consequence. No one will listen to me with sufficient authority to take really practical steps towards rendering my invention of value. I thought

that if at the risk of my life I could get speech of Your Royal Highness, I might succeed in obtaining your sympathy. I want no reward or self-aggrandisement of any sort. I am above all else an Englishman, and I hope that this fact will be sufficient excuse for my action at this moment."

He uttered these words with such absolute conviction in every tone, and yet with an air of decision and self-reliance that could not fail to be impressive, that the Prince of Wales was strongly disposed to hear him further.

"You know," he said, "that at such a time as this every moment of my life is taken up with important business. Do you feel justified in demanding half an hour from me to listen to you under these considerations?"

"I do, Your Royal Highness," was the reply.

The Prince turned to the amazed commander of the body-guard, who was standing near the carriage ready at a word or a sign to run his sword into the unfortunate inventor should he turn out to be what he looked like, namely, a dangerous lunatic, and said: "Captain Duncombe, kindly take charge of this man and bring him to me personally at Marlborough House at five o'clock. Tell the attendants that it is my express desire you should both see me in person."

The officer saluted, and the inventor, with a look of utmost gratitude and satisfaction on his face, quitted his hold on the carriage and disappeared into the crowd in charge of his escort.

Punctually at the appointed hour Captain Duncombe and his companion, who had meanwhile made himself known as Henry Thompson, an electrical engineer, in the employ of the City of London Electric Lighting Corporation, presented themselves at Marlborough House.

The officer had accompanied the man to the latter's lodgings in order to obtain a working model of the device which he wished to exhibit to the Prince of Wales, and before allowing it to be packed up had assured himself that it con-

tained nothing in its constituents harmful to human life, however disastrous to that commodity it might prove in subsequent operation.

The Prince of Wales not only listened to Mr. Thompson with the utmost care and appreciation for more than half an hour, but astonished the Commander of the Royal Guard by requesting the loan of a magazine rifle. Some experiments were forthwith made in a coach-house, the doors and windows of which had been closed.

As a result of these strange proceedings, Mr. Thompson was brought back into the Royal study, whilst a messenger was dispatched for the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Wolseley arrived five minutes later, and the whole matter, whatever it might be, was gone into again with him.

His lordship appeared to be quite as much impressed with Mr. Thompson's invention as the Prince of Wales himself had been, and the remarkable outcome of this poor and unknown electrician taking the desperate step of forcing himself upon the attention of Royalty in such unpromising manner was that on the following day he found himself at the head of a vast electrical manufactory, with practically *carte blanche* instructions from the War Office and the Treasury to turn out as many duplicates of his invention as was possible by working day and night.

The influence of this episode upon the subsequent character of the struggle between England and her enemies became evident later on.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VOYAGE OF THE "HORNET."

FROM the course of events it has been made clear that Lieutenant Rodney accomplished, without hitch or deviation of any sort, the chief part of the special mission upon which he was so suddenly dispatched by Lord Eskdale.

It was not until a fellow-countryman entered the mail train at Bologna, late on the Wednesday evening, that Rodney learnt the full significance of his journey. The Italian newspapers were selling in hundreds in the station, and a chance inquiry made by the new arrival elicited the fact that war had been declared and the allied fleets were then on their way to the English coast. The Englishman who gave this information was himself intent upon catching the *Peninsular* at Brindisi in the hope that he might be able to get home by that means, as the possibility of crossing the Continent by train was practically out of the question.

The *Peninsular* was true to her appointed time. Rodney had little leisure to make some purchases to complete his scanty outfit before he stepped from the marble quay to the deck of that fine steamer. A brief conversation with the Captain led him to give some emphatic orders to the chief engineer, and when the *Peninsular* swung out of the little harbour, with its quaint windmill-shaped castle guarding the entrance, the log forthwith recorded a speed of seventeen knots per hour. There would be no bonus for officers or engineers for that voyage, owing to the economy of coal consumption.

On Friday morning at six o'clock Valetta was reached, and when the *Peninsular's* anchor rattled from her bows, Midshipman Fisher, attached for special duty to the *Hornet*, swung himself on board from a steam-launch and inquired for Rodney.

"Sir Arthur Fremantle is waiting for you at the Castle, sir," he said, saluting, as Frank had hastened towards the youngster when he saw him climbing up the ship's side. "He is anxious to see you immediately."

"Tumble my traps overboard, and I will be with you in half a tick," was the answer, and Rodney hastened off to bid the captain "Good-bye" in case circumstances should prevent him from rejoining the *Peninsular*, as the ship left again in two hours.

The next time he set foot on the vessel's deck, Ethel and he were *en route* to Egypt for their honeymoon tour.

"What's the news, here?" he inquired as he took his place by the midshipman's side in the stern sheets of the little launch which rapidly throbbed its way to the steps of St. John.

"We've all got the jumps," was the answer. "The fleet left yesterday morning at half-an-hour's notice, bound for Gib., we believe. At twelve o'clock every blessed cable was cut somewhere or another, and since then we have been drinking pegs and asking each other 'What's up?' There are 8000 troops here and 1000 militia, and every man jack is a complete note of interrogation in himself."

"We are at war with France and Germany," said Rodney. The boatswain heard the reply, and, as discipline forbade him to yell or curse, or even whistle, he pressed the throttle-valve hard down and made the launch hum with excitement.

"Then what in thunder was the *Hornet* left here for?" asked Midshipman Fisher, scarlet with indignation at the thought that there was a row going on and he was not in it.

The *Hornet*, it may be explained, is a diminutive torpedo-

boat destroyer, very smart and very small, so there was no wonder that Rodney laughed as he answered: "All right, young 'un. Don't be alarmed. You 'll see sparks before this business is over."

There was no time for further conversation. When the launch reached the landing-place Rodney was met by the Assistant Military Secretary, Captain J. S. Stewart, of the Cameron Highlanders, and taken straight to the Governor's quarters.

Sir Arthur Lyon Fremantle received his momentous intelligence with an air of deeper concern than Master Fisher had displayed.

"Seymour and I feared as much when your telegrams reached us," he said. "The word you used meant that we were to be prepared for the worst possible eventualities in the way of a hostile combination, and both Admiralty and War Office have repeatedly urged the necessity for momentary readiness for action. Have you heard that six French warships passed south of the island this morning at 5.30, steaming rapidly eastwards?"

"No, sir. I have been on shore only five minutes."

"I thought that perhaps it might be known to the people on the launch. We are secure enough here," went on the Governor, "but I wish we could do something more than act on the defensive only."

"Where were the enemy going, in your opinion, sir?" said Rodney.

"To seize the Suez Canal, undoubtedly, and to capture all the British merchant ships they may encounter. It is fortunate that they cannot fall in with the *Peninsular*, which may now escape. I suppose they will also occupy Perim, for the sake of the coal supply, and probably bombard Aden. By the manner in which they have telegraphically isolated us, I have no doubt that the garrisons of both places will be in ignorance of the progress of events until the enemy's fleet commences hostilities."

"Why should they not be stopped?" cried the naval officer, starting up excitedly from his chair.

"Stopped! What can we do?" exclaimed the Governor.

"Blow up the Canal!" was the emphatic rejoinder.

"We can't blow it up by talking about it," remarked Captain Ewart.

"No. But the *Hornet* is here, and if she is ready for sea she can get to Port Said before the enemy's fleet," said Rodney, now thoroughly excited.

"She is in first-rate trim," said the Governor. "Sir Michael Seymour told me so himself, and he left her here to act as a dispatch vessel if necessary. Unfortunately her commander, Lieutenant Cator, has been very ill from island fever, and is still extremely weak."

"Send me, sir," cried Rodney. "You can forward a note to the Admiral by the *Peninsular* to explain my absence and your intentions."

"Lieutenant Rodney," said the Governor cordially extending his hand, "you are a man of action. Go, and take my heartfelt thanks for your offer, which I gratefully accept. I leave all details to you, and Captain Ewart will take you to the Admiral Superintendent so that all the resources of the dockyard may be placed at your disposal. It has always been the intention of the authorities to convert the Mediterranean into a French lake in the event of a war with France, and I see no harm in allowing Germany and Russia to share the privilege with her. I will communicate, as you suggest, with Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, and I wish you good luck. Have you any plan? If successful do you return here?"

"I think, sir, it would be best to dash through the Red Sea and warn Aden. Perhaps the cable to Bombay may be uninjured, and we could thus give India timely information."

"It is a desperate project," said Sir Arthur Fremantle, with a kindly smile.

"It looks pretty stiff, sir, I admit," replied Frank, "but it may be easy enough. Will you let me write a line to be forwarded with yours?"

He hastily scribbled a note to Ethel, which ran as follows :

MALTA, May 5, 1898.

DEAREST,—If you hear that the Suez Canal is blown up, you may feel certain that I am all serene. See my mother and kiss her for me. I am skipper of the *Hornet* for the next week.

Yours ever,

FRANK RODNEY.

Before noon the *Hornet* was ready for sea, presenting a strange sight for such a trim little ship, as her decks were piled high with bags of coal to eke out her ordinary supply of fuel.

As she steamed down the magnificent harbour the quays of Valetta itself and the "Three Cities" were crowded with cheering soldiers and port operatives, whilst a salute of seven guns was fired from one of the forts, compliments that the little vessel shrilly returned by means of her steam whistle. Quickly gaining way, she rattled off to the east at twenty knots an hour, and, after fixing a temporary crow's-nest for a lookout on top of an improvised foremast, Rodney went below to have a quiet chat with Cator, his brother officer and old-time chum when they were cadets together on board the *Britannia*.

At six bells in the middle watch, in other words at 3 a.m., on Saturday, whilst the *Hornet* was spinning away under her forced draught of 3300 horse-power, her speed being then close on twenty-five knots an hour, the lookout sighted the French fleet, which was visible through the hazy light of dawn about four miles away on the port bow.

Rodney, who was asleep, turned out instantly, and climbed to the crow's-nest, whence he could plainly distinguish the six vessels, two armoured battle-ships and four first-class cruisers, travelling leisurely at about half the pace of the *Hornet*, in the direction of Port Said.

An attempt was made by the enemy to pursue and overtake them, but the fast little ship literally laughed at the effort.

By the afternoon of Sunday the *Hornet* was within sixty miles of the Canal. Her deck was now clear of coal-bags, and some inroad had been made upon her bunkers. She had made a superb run—over 1000 miles in little more than two days—and Rodney decided to steam boldly into the Canal by daylight, and trust to luck in dealing with any enemy he might encounter there.

He reached the dirty but picturesque port by five o'clock, and demanded the right of one of Her Majesty's ships to take precedence of all other vessels waiting to enter the Canal.

The French officials hardly knew what to say, being conscious that war had broken out, but they thought it best to simply treat the passage of the *Hornet* as an ordinary event, and forthwith supplied her with the huge electric lamp that enables vessels to make their way through the Canal by night. During the delay Rodney ascertained from the captain of a British ship in the harbour that the Canal was clear of warships, so far as he knew, and in return for the information the naval officer advised him to set his course round by the north of Candia if he wished to save his ship from destruction by the French fleet.

Rodney determined to destroy the Canal at a point between Ferdeneh and El Gisir, where the banks are fairly high. Once inside, therefore, he pushed ahead at a much more rapid rate than the stately pace prescribed by the regulations, and put an end to the expostulations of the French pilot by having him securely lashed to a chair in the mess-room.

By midnight he had reached the spot selected. Every preliminary had been thought of during the journey from Malta. No sooner was the vessel tied up by the Canal side than the whole available crew set to work to bore blasting

holes along the banks for a distance of two hundred yards on each shore.

For many hours they worked undisturbed. Two ships passed during the night, and, as they approached, the working parties temporarily returned to the *Hornet* to escape observation, and to be ready to use guns or torpedo against a possible foe. But the two passers-by were an English collier bound for Aden and an Austrian Lloyd steamer from India.

At last all preparations were made.

Twelve bore-holes had been driven into the banks to a vertical depth of ten feet, and several pounds of dynamite or blasting powder deposited at the bottom of each. Time-fuses were affixed to the powder charges, and detonators, governed by long pieces of cord, controlled the dynamite.

When all was ready Rodney himself ignited each of the five-minute fuses, and saw that the men in charge of the dynamite sections were stationed, cord in hand, at the safest distance obtainable under the circumstances. Their instructions were to rapidly jerk the cord the moment that the first gunpowder explosion occurred and then run for their lives towards the desert, in order to escape falling stones and *débris*.

At the final moment the service telegraph wire of the Canal was cut, as a precautionary measure, and then everyone waited anxiously for the *dénouement*.

A loud roar announced the firing of the first time-fuse mine. Almost simultaneously there came a tremendous explosion from the dynamite charges. With a crash that seemed to shake the sky and loosen the firm earth the terrific explosive tore thousands of tons of soil and rock from the solid banks of the Canal. In a second a great cloud of smoke and dust rose into the air, and spread around in impenetrable density, whilst a big wave raced along the Canal and made itself felt for many miles north and south along its length.

Two or three minor explosions followed, from the remainder of the powder mines, and when at last it was safe to make an inspection, Rodney found that the Canal was blocked in such fashion that it would require months of labour to make it passable for vessels.

He collected his ship's company, and there were no casualties, though Midshipman Fisher had been sharply rapped on the head by a falling pebble.

When, three days later, Rodney went ashore at Perim to obtain more coal, and to have lunch with the British subaltern in command of the hundred Sepoys who garrison the island, he entertained this worthy by a graphic account of the scene in the desert as the great cloud rose from the explosion.

"It must have been a fine sight," said the sub., "but I will knock it out here if any of the enemy's fleet come along."

"How?" inquired Rodney.

"There are 30,000 tons of coal always in stock on this island, and my orders are to set fire to the lot when I consider there is any danger of its falling into the hands of an enemy. That'll be worth seeing on a fine night, won't it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE BOULEVARDS.

DURING the first days of the war Paris was in a frenzied state of exultation.

Along the boulevards and in the cafés excited groups, moved by a common impulse of national enthusiasm, gathered to discuss in extravagant language, and with all the heat of Gallic passion, this sudden swoop upon an unsuspecting foe. With every class of the community the war was popular. Work was laid aside and pleasure forgotten, whilst *ouvrier* and patrician mingled in a common abandonment of rapture which showed how fiercely and deep burnt the fires of hereditary hatred.

“ Agincourt is at last avenged ! ” screamed one heated orator from the pedestal of the statue of Jeanne d’Arc, to which he had climbed at the bidding of a tumultuous mob. “ The hated Saxon is at our feet. We spared him at Waterloo, but it was only to sweep him in the end more cleanly from his wretched island ! ”

And this bombast was cheered to the echo.

The very *gamins* took up the cry and patrolled the streets shrieking insolent vaudevilles tossed off by the score by newspaper hacks, and all turning on some ribald jest at the expense of the enemy. One of the most popular, set to a well-known air, which Yvette Guilbert was then singing at the Casino, ran :

Ça y est, donc, en l’Angleterre,
Front de bœuf, et plein d’bière,
Trop de ventre, pour s’enfuir,
V’la un homme, qui nous fait rire.

And crowds of people marched along the streets at night repeating, with inexhaustible delight, this feeble quatrain.

No Ministry had ever been so popular. The President—who took care to ride in the Bois—was followed by a cheering mob, and M. Hanotaux was carried bodily along the Champs Elysées from the Louvre to the Arc de Triomphe where he was made to deliver a thrilling and patriotic speech.

“We win too early and forgive too late!” muttered a deputy who shook his head at the premature rejoicings of his countrymen.

Later in the day M. Hanotaux detailed his adventures to the President, and was jubilant at the course of events.

But the head of the Republic manifested anxiety on the question of supplies. “I hope that America may be impelled to take our side,” he said. “We must conceal our desires with regard to Canada at present.”

For a while the Parisians were too much occupied with celebrating their success to mark the absence of subsequent news. The telegram which announced the capture of Worthing had satisfied their vanity. But after a time came strange rumours that a hitch had occurred somewhere. Despite the persistence of the Press, which every hour flooded the streets with exciting information of an advance upon London, the flight of the Queen of England to Balmoral, and the suicide of the Lord Mayor, there came a moment’s pause in the general rejoicing.

Le Matin had announced that the French fleet had been sighted off Brest, and was making for the harbour.

At first the intelligence was received with incredulity, and the office of *Le Matin* was besieged by a furious mob, which broke the windows and would have torn the editor to shreds if he had not made his escape to the cellar.

When confirmation came, it was instantly declared that the return of the navy was only a subtle strategy to lure the British to a more disastrous overthrow. No one believed

that it could mean retreat. But the sage deputy observed with foreboding that the President did not ride in the Bois that day. *Le Gaulois* shrieked more fiercely than ever.

"England," it declared, "shivers behind her money-bags. This monster of injustice cares not that her honour is gone, but she trembles for her gold. Lord Chamberlain and Sir Balfour are quaking beneath the beak of the eagle, and our navy, triumphant, returns to bear us the glorious news."

But, alas ! this false security could ill withstand the shock of truth.

On Friday morning the people of Brest witnessed a terrible sight. The shattered French ships of the allied fleets, crushed, maimed, and helpless, slowly made their way into the harbour, with sides ripped up and masts gone, with decks ploughed by shell and rudders almost useless. A horrified crowd assembled on the quay, and stood aghast and shuddering at these awful tokens of overwhelming ruin.

But their grief and rage knew no bounds when along the narrow gangways were borne ashore the wounded and dying in agonising and what seemed endless file. The havoc of the fight had made unutterable wrecks of the splendid crews who a few days before had manned the vessels in the pride of perfect manhood. Horrible wounds and ghastly fractures, such as our modern shells cause, which leave scarcely a trace of human form and tear to fragments the frames of their victims, sent tremours through the crowd.

There could no longer be doubt. The fool's paradise in which a whole nation had lived for so brief a space was rudely demolished.

The fatal news spread apace, and in a few hours Paris lay prostrate beneath the blow. Nor was it long before the whole catastrophe became known, how two great navies had been crushed, and England, taken by surprise and scarce defended, still rose above the sea, calm and triumphant, unsoiled by the touch of a hostile foot.

Mercurial in its moods, quick to extremes of anger as to

extremes of joy, knowing no mean between the two, and incapable of that phlegmatic courage which receives defeat with courage as it welcomes victory without undue elation, the Paris mob, when it had recovered from the stun of the terrible news, became frantic with ungovernable rage.

Wild crowds rushed through the streets in fury, maddened by humiliation and reckless with passion. An exultant people had in a moment become a savage mob. There was but one thought, that of revenge on someone—anyone—who might suggest himself to the disordered public mind.

As the day drew to its close, the more peaceful citizens became alarmed. Paris was no longer under control. Violent speakers, foaming with fury, demanded a new government—a communism—a new reign of terror. The members of the Cabinet had fled to their houses, and the President was compelled to surround the Elysée with troops.

Instead of calming the public feeling, the Parisian papers fanned the flames of revolt.

"*Nous sommes trahis !*" exclaimed *Le Figaro* in its opening words of comment, "France is once more the devoted victim of the treachery of her own sons. She has been delivered by base intrigue to her ruin. English gold and German hatred have bought her rulers. We are sacrificed to their perfidy. Her trusting confidence and simple love have been the ministers to her destruction. Down with the traitors ! *A l'Elysée ! A l'Elysée !*"

Le Journal boldly declared M. Hanotaux to be the ruling spirit of this betrayal, and the minister who was shouldered along the streets on Thursday by an enthusiastic multitude was execrated on Friday as "*le second Judas*." Not a member of the Cabinet was safe. It would have been death to any one of them had he appeared.

It was ominous that the Paris edition of the *New York Reporter* had, during the first three days, contented itself with the bare chronicling of the dramatic sweep of events. There was no word of comment; the editor was studiously dumb,



"WILD CROWDS RUSHED THROUGH THE STREETS."

It was as if delicacy to the people over whom the newspaper exercised so potent an influence demanded silence—a silence that had all the force of a tacit condemnation.

Le Matin had confidently appealed to old alliances and a common foe. It recalled hysterically the ancient feud with England which resulted in the establishment of an independent country across the water. But the *Reporter* was not stirred to response, nor even to quotation, and the imperturbability of a journal noted for its piquant and lively comment produced a serious impression upon the more responsible French papers.

But matters became worse later on when the opinion of the native American Press upon the situation was flashed along the Mackay-Bennett cable. If respect to the land of its adoption made the Paris *Reporter* silent, at least it did not prevent the insertion of quotations from the newspapers published at home, and their tone was non-committal enough to cause misgivings wherever the hope of active sympathy prevailed.

On the Saturday morning the Paris edition of the New York *Reporter*, under a demure heading, which carefully avoided sensation, published the following :

“ We have scrupulously refrained from passing an opinion on the sensational events of the past few days. An American journal in French territory should at least respect the obligations of a guest, and it is impossible for us, as it would be discourteous, to throw our weight into the camp of either belligerent. It is our plain duty to preserve a neutral attitude. We therefore print, without comment, extracts from some of the more influential papers of America which have reached us through cable to-day.

“ The Boston *News* passes no opinion on the rights of the quarrel between England and those who are attacking her. But it insists that the policy of America is absolute neutrality. ‘ Under no circumstances,’ continues that journal, ‘ can we depart from the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine,

which practically restricts the United States to her own shores. So long as her independence is in no way threatened, she has no possible justification for embroiling herself in European complications. America will witness the struggle calmly to the end.'

"The *Chicago Telegraph* urges the same policy of non-intervention, though the paper is sympathetic with the allies. 'England must look after herself,' it says, 'and we, who have not forgotten her arrogance in dealing with the Venezuelan dispute without consulting the wishes of the United States, cannot be blind to the utility of a sharp lesson being administered to her. France is the natural ally of America. So long as the statue of Liberty adorns the entrance to New York harbour, so long shall we be reminded of French services to American independence. As a nation, we cannot and shall not interfere. When the time comes for treaty-making the United States will demand a hearing.'

"The *New York Globe* observes: 'We are in horror of what has occurred. Civilisation stands aghast at the iniquity of the blow. It seems as if the Continent has swept away its centuries of progression, and stands stripped to the skin, disclosing the primeval savage. If France imagines that she can count upon the assistance of the United States because of past services, she has made a profound mistake. Liberty is the watchword of our constitution, and it is the interest, no less than the earnest desire of a great Republic, to protest against a giant wrong perpetrated in the name of a giant greed. All Americans will abhor the outburst that threatens to overwhelm England, and in her time of need we frankly admit her to be the pioneer of freedom and peace.' "

America was clearly to be neutral, as international law compelled, and these words flashed across the sea were ominously suggestive of the vanity of French hope in this direction.

Yet some good fruits accrued from the passionate articles in the French Press. Paris, so childlike in her impulses, was

brought round to a reasonable mood, and though there was no longer enthusiasm or hysterical fervour, there was at least a calmer spirit—a more resolute front.

On the following Monday a Council of War was summoned at the *Élysée*. It was a full meeting of French and German Ministers, and the conference was long and anxious.

The terrible repulse of the fleet had come upon them all with consternation : there was no longer the air of certainty which prevailed at first. The President of the Republic thought less of Whitehall, and Count Holbach had postponed his negotiations for the occupation of Gibraltar.

M. Hanotaux was still confident.

“The fleet is driven back,” he observed ; “but that is a bagatelle. We have in the Mediterranean a combined force of men and ships powerful enough to decimate the whole British Empire. Let us not be discouraged. Before the enemy is able to call together its scattered strength we shall have sailed through the Straits and formed a fatal cordon around the British Islands.”

This sounded reasonable enough. The stupendous fleet of the two countries was already on its way. It was a gathering of giants, and the English defences seemed feeble and ridiculous before it.

“In five days,” observed Count Caprivi, “we shall be once more in the Channel. We have delayed, not thrown away, the victory.”

At this moment a special messenger arrived with a telegram. The President opened it, and turned pale as he read :

“Gentlemen,” he said slowly, “this message tells us that the enemy has been forewarned. The Suez Canal is blown up, and we have no longer a road to India.”

There was a dead silence. The news had stunned them.

At last Count Holbach essayed to deal with the situation.

“These English are full of resources,” he said. “They mean to give us trouble. So much the worse for them.”

Meanwhile let us not be over-concerned. Our plan lies not just now through the Suez. We will cripple the island, and then let India do what it will. The boom of our guns will be heard by the shores of Britain before the week is out. Give me seven days and I will lay her helpless."

Another knock came, and another messenger with a telegram.

The President bit his lips.

"The Straits of Gibraltar are blockaded!" he exclaimed. "This is annoying; our plans must suffer delay. But, thank Heaven, it is nothing worse."

"Nothing worse!" It was General Gourko, hitherto silent, who intervened. "You regard this as of less moment?"

"It merely delays us," returned the President.

"Gentlemen," declared Gourko, "the first telegram was disturbing enough; the second is appalling. Do you not see what has happened?"

There were inquiring murmurs. Everyone turned an anxious gaze upon the Russian general.

"It means," he continued impressively, "that the Mediterranean is no longer a sea. It is impassable. It is now reduced to the condition of a lake, and your great fleets are imprisoned in it without possibility of escape. You are stripped of your most powerful arm."

"We can seize Malta!" stammered M. Hanatoux.

"Malta," observed Caprivi, "is impregnable, and it is provisioned for three years. England has destroyed exit and entrance, and your splendid ships are of no further use to you!"

At this solemn pronouncement, which was so obviously true, there came into the breasts of the Council a terrible fear. For the first time it dawned upon them that their task was not so easy as it appeared, that, amazing to say, England might yet rise in her strength and smite them all!

CHAPTER IX.

IMPREGNABLE GIBRALTAR.

WHEN Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour surveyed his fleet under the lee of the Rock, he felt that few British naval commanders had ever looked upon so goodly a company.

His flag was hoisted on board the *Ramillies*, and that of his second in command, Rear-Admiral Compton E. Domville, on the *Trafalgar*. The other first-class battle-ships in the roads were the *Anson*, *Barfleur*, *Camperdown*, *Collingwood*, *Hood*, *Howe*, *Nile*, and *Rodney*. The torpedo-ram *Polyphemus*, the cruisers *Hawke*, *Arethusa*, *Cambrian*, *Fearless*, *Scout*, and *Sybille*, and the gunboats *Ardent*, *Dryad*, *Hebe*, and *Skipjack* were valuable additions to the British fighting force.

In the path of any vessels coming from Toulon, the *Cockatrice* and *Surprise*, fast dispatch vessels, kept watch and ward some sixty to seventy miles away.

Some French ships of war approached the Straits a few hours after the Mediterranean fleet had reached Gibraltar. They appeared vastly surprised to find such an array of heavy metal in their way. Without any effort to try conclusions with the British ships, they promptly executed a *volte-face*.

But when early on Wednesday morning, long before the sun had cast the shadow of the Rock over the Bay towards Algeciras, the *Surprise* and *Cockatrice* steamed in to announce that a fleet of eighteen battle-ships, twenty-one cruisers, and fourteen torpedo gunboats was approaching Gibraltar, there

is little wonder that Sir Michael Seymour's hurried conference with Rear-Admiral Domville and the captains of ships was grave and serious. The problem before them was perplexing enough.

The Admiral's whole thought was given towards the best plan for forcing the enemy under the guns of the Rock, which command, it must be explained, the Bay, and the tongue of land connecting the peninsula with Spain, and not the Straits themselves, which are some fourteen miles wide at that point.

"I propose, gentlemen," said the Admiral, "to form the fighting line of battle-ships in a crescent, concave towards the enemy. The *Ramillies* will take the right of the line and the *Trafalgar* the left, and ships will take interval at twelve cables' length apart. As soon as the action commences ships will echelon four points to the starboard, still preserving the crescent formation, until the right of our fighting line rests upon the Rock and the left tends towards Algieras. When this position is reached and the attack pressed home we may safely leave all ships within the crescent to the care of our friends on shore, and give our immediate attention, if possible, to such of the enemy's cruisers as may be in the Straits. Our cruisers and gunboats will take station on the right and immediate rear of the *Ramillies*, to prevent torpedo attacks from that quarter."

About the same time Vice-Admiral von Grödenau, to whom, by virtue of seniority, the command of the combined squadron had been assigned, was consulting with Contre-Amiral des Vismes de Monthier as to his plan of attack.

"It is above all things important," he insisted, "that the cruisers should get to sea and reach Brest intact, if this absurd rumour about a contemplated invasion of France by England be correct. I therefore, my comrade, ask you to command the assault upon the battle-ships, and I would recommend that you should endeavour to draw them into the Bay of Algieras. When the fight is well advanced I

will dash past with the cruisers through the open channel, but I would pray you to keep from beneath the guns of that infernal fortress. In the open bay you should have little difficulty in dealing with the Lord Seymour. After destroying his fleet you can leisurely follow me, leaving Gibraltar to itself, and sending your disabled ships—for the English will assuredly fight hard—back to Toulon for repairs.”

The French officer, as fine a sailor as ever stepped on a quarter-deck, cordially assented, and, as it transpired, “Lord Seymour” would also have agreed to the Frenchman’s part of the programme had he been present.

The shadow of the Rock fell across the path of the British ships as they steamed out, in magnificent array, to take up position in the Straits. It was a fine summer’s morning. The coasts of Africa and Spain, with their green slopes merging into the brown hues of rocky headlands—capped by the deep blue of distant mountains—were clearly visible in the pellucid atmosphere, and a slight haze over the ultramarine horizon of the Mediterranean gave promise of a burning hot day when the sun rose high in the heavens.

Above all, thrusting its majestic pinnacles into the sky, towered the Rock of Gibraltar, grim, menacing, grandly typical of British power and dignity, whilst a royal salute of twenty-one guns thundered a message of sympathy and fortitude to the passing flotilla.

As the last cannon pealed forth its solemn note over the bay, the band on the Admiral’s ship struck up “Rule Britannia,” and a poetic midshipman, in the foretop of the *Collingwood*, was so overcome with the varied sensations of the moment, that he turned for communion with a kindred spirit to a Scotch midgy named Malcolm Macdonald.

“How do you feel, Scottie?” he inquired.

“I feel as if I wanted my breakfast,” was the reply.

“Oh, I don’t mean that,” said the other with infinite scorn. “Does n’t your soul throb with the influences of the scene?”

"I'm minded to leave Froggy to think about his soul," said Macdonald. "I can smell the ham and eggs from here."

And even the poetic youth agreed, with a hungry look towards the deck, that it was time the relief came.

At nine o'clock the enemy was sighted, and Des Vismes de Monthier formed his eighteen ships into a wedge-shaped array when he saw the disposition of the British fleet. At 9.30 the first shot was fired by the *Ramillies*, and the action was general a few minutes later.

Admiral Seymour was surprised at the ease with which the enemy allowed himself to be driven into the Bay of Algeiras. Under other circumstances the fact might have roused his suspicions, more particularly because he had seen—from his favourable position on the outer horn of the crescent—the mass of cruisers and gunboats some miles in the rear of the attacking squadron. But outnumbered as he was, with a superior weight of metal against him, and a very much larger number of men on board individual ships than he possessed, it was utterly impossible to pay attention to any other concern than the matter in hand, which was pressing enough in all conscience.

The French commander had a slice of luck at the outset.

His ships being in closer formation than the British vessels he was able to concentrate his fire from the apex of the triangle upon the centre of the British line. The *Camperdown* and *Alexandra* were smashed into absolute wrecks in a few minutes, and the former was only able to ram and sink the *Amiral Baudin* before she herself commenced to fill and settle down—barely giving the remnant of her crew time to jump into their boats and pull for their lives out of the maelstrom she created as she went to the bottom.

By this time the two horns of the crescent had closed well round the allied fleet, and the terrific fire of the British ships, aided by the tremendous current that swirls round the southern face of the Rock into the bay, was steadily driving the enemy into the position desired by Sir Michael Seymour.

At the base of the Rock, in front of the little Mall, where the rank and fashion of Gibraltar assemble at eventide to listen to the strains of a military band, a small group of anxious gunners stood in the bastion of the 110-ton gun. This brown monster was lightly poised on its powerful hydraulic carriage a few feet above sea level. For the first time in its history it was about to finally determine the vexed question of its value in marine warfare.

Only once in its existence—on the occasion of its gunnery trials, after leaving the foundry—had a full charge of powder been used in propelling its enormous shell, weighing nearly 1000 pounds, and capable of smashing its way at a distance of some miles through the body of the most heavily armoured vessel afloat. The great damage done to the rifling of the gun by that discharge led even its most sanguine supporters to allot it a life of but thirty rounds, and the opponents of gigantic ordnance predicted complete failure for the weapon when used in active warfare.

For purposes of annual target practice only a half, or even smaller charge of powder was used, and the lapse of years under these less trying conditions had not improved the rifling.

But Major Humphreys, R.A.,—a tall, stern-looking soldier, with the reputation of a scientist even in the scientific arm—who was in charge of the gun that day, believed in it fully and fearlessly, and his cold impassive face relaxed into a lover-like interest as he cast an approving glance over the superb contour of the placid giant which was so soon to bear testimony to its worth.

The opposing squadrons drew momentarily nearer. In the heat and fury of the combat, the French Admiral did not note the skilful manner in which he was being driven into the eastern portion of the bay.

Within the bastion the knot of men drew back in response to a quiet command from the Major. The latter, paying no heed to the actualities of the conflict from which the others

could hardly tear their eyes, calmly scrutinised a small mirror which lay in the bastion, and formed the object-glass of a species of camera obscura on which the Bay of Algeciras was outlined in quaintly diminutive but wonderfully distinct manner.

Another low-toned order, and the great gun swung round on its pivot to a determined point on the horizon. A slight depression of the muzzle brought it to bear upon a definite spot in the waste of waters—every superficial yard of which has long been triangulated within that bastion.

Then those who were near enough peered with the Major into the depths of the mirror, and saw the stern of a German battle-ship slowly cross a meridional line shown in the picture.

Major Humphreys placed the forefinger of his right hand—without the slightest apparent tremor in his frame, though every other man in the battery was shaking with excitement—upon a small white electric button at the side of the mirror. When the funnel of the warship intersected the vertical line he pressed the button home.

In that instant an appalling crash rent the air. Several heavy stones were dislodged by mere shock from their firm beds in the casement. Large masses of turf and grass-grown earth fell into the sea from the top of the bastion, and a great cloud of dust and smoke momentarily obscured the view.

When this had cleared away, the stern of the *Kaiserhof* was seen to rise high in the air, with twin screws spinning madly round as she dived through the swirl of waters caused by the explosion of her boilers, and disappeared from sight.

A loud cheer went up from the other officers and men in the small inclosure, but the Major only took his handkerchief from his breast and carefully dusted the face of the mirror, upon which some specks of dirt had fallen.

The colossal cannon listlessly dropped back into the bastion by the force of the recoil. It was sponged out, reloaded, and rapidly hoisted into position.

Again a ship, the *Sadowa*, drifted across the fatal line, and again the enormous steel-faced projectile shrieked through the air. Striking this time a little above the water-line, it smashed right through a 13-inch armour-plate, through protective coal-bunkers, through two immense boilers, and passed out of the other side of the ship to fall into the sea some hundreds of yards farther on.

The *Sadowa* did not sink, but drifted helplessly away to the Spanish coast, and remained there, her officers and crew reaching France by train some days later.

Major Humphreys looked slightly annoyed, and he sharply told the subaltern in charge of the regulating vernier to be more careful with his distance calculations.

The subaltern *was* more careful, and the next French ship in the enemy's line went down with commendable exactitude.

These incidents did not escape the notice of the belligerents in the bay. During a brief interval the firing actually slackened, so astounded were both parties with the effect of this new element in the fight.

Amiral des Vismes de Monthier gave imperative orders for a dash seawards, and even as the signal-flags fluttered in the breeze, a German battle-ship succumbed to one of those demoniacal blows from 1000 pounds of metal travelling at almost meteoric speed.

Sir Michael Culme-Seymour saw the signal and guessed its import. He had lost two of his ships, the *Camperdown* and the *Anson*, and the *Alexandra*, *Howe*, and *Rodney* were disabled. But six of the hostile fleet, not including the four accounted for by the 110-ton gun, had gone beneath the waves with all hands, and the British ships plunged into the contest with renewed vigour, as the battle was now won to all intents and purposes.

The French commander was as brave as a lion. When he found that he could not break through the encompassing ring he anchored his ship, so as not to be driven within

range of that irresistible destroyer on the shore, and resolved to fight on to the bitter end.

A fifth of the allies' ships was rendered useless by a thunderbolt from the battery at the base of the Rock. But the effect of the shot called forth another sharp reprimand from the Major, and the gunner to whom he spoke replied respectfully, but firmly, that he had made no mistake in the range calculation ; of that he was quite sure.

The Major himself adjusted the vernier before the sixth discharge, and a great hole was knocked in the side of the *Majestueuse*, but she did not sink.

The self-control which Major Humphreys had so far exhibited now deserted him. His hand actually shook as he pressed the electric communication for the seventh time, intending to finish the business of the *Majestueuse*. But to the trained ears of the artillerymen in the bastion the explosion from the gun had a different sound, and the shell was seen to fall into the sea a thousand yards short of its object.

As the monster dropped back on its carriage the Major sprang hastily forward to the muzzle and gave a glance into the interior. Then he flung his arm around the grimy mouth of the gun and burst into tears.

The rifling had been ripped to pieces by the last shot, and the 110-ton gun was now an inert mass of iron and steel. The deep grooves were mangled and serrated with metal from the shells. The inside of the monster had been literally torn out of it, and the "Gibraltar Baby," as it was familiarly known in the service, was completely disabled by its own superb power.

But it had nobly done its duty. Its cost to England was some £30,000, but its cost to France and Germany was more than three millions sterling, besides converting a possible victory into a certain defeat for the allies.

The guns in the galleries of the Rock were now joining in the fray, and there are 700 of them, big and little, new and old.

Common humanity impelled Amiral de Monthier to strike his colours, and he took such scant comfort as he could find in the fact that his colleague had slipped away through the Straits, whilst the British fleet was quite unable to stop or pursue him.

The *Polyphemus*, *Hawke*, *Fearless*, and *Hebe* started off after the enemy's second fleet, it is true, but they were promptly recalled by Sir Michael Seymour, who ordered the *Seahorse* and *Cockatrice* to follow up the enemy, note his direction, and report at Portsmouth at the earliest possible moment. He also forwarded the *Surprise* with a brief dispatch announcing the result of the engagement.

When Des Vismes de Monthier met the British Commander-in-Chief the latter promptly offered him his liberty on parole through the war, and the gallant Frenchman, after some demur, fell in with this magnanimous proposal.

"But," he said, speaking in broken English, "I would one leetle ting to ask."

"What is that?" said the Admiral.

"I would see ze *grand canon*," he replied; and he was taken to the bastion by the British Commander-in-Chief.

CHAPTER X.

AN ALLY AND A PROCLAMATION.

A WELL organised and simultaneous attack was now being made upon the rich possessions of Great Britain throughout the world. And it was at just such a time that Englishmen and their enemies alike were able to comprehend, what peace had often been allowed in part to blur, the extent and wealth of a noble domain, more fruitful and more widely strewn than even the Roman Empire itself.

There was Canada, stretching from ocean to ocean, and pressing through immemorial snows towards the Pole, loyal-est of the loyal, cherishing her kinship with the mother-land as her dearest inheritance, oft suffering for her patriotic zeal, yet untempted by those who would seduce her from her allegiance or bribe her into independence.

Toward the south, too, was the Cape of Good Hope, with all the rich territory which lay to the north, the golden garden of Africa, scarcely yet tamed from barbarism, yet smiling in prosperity, the home of a new and sturdy English race which could not be dazzled by its riches into forgetfulness of the country from which it sprang.

Vaster still was Australia with its neighbouring islands of New Zealand, the noblest pasture-lands of earth, stirring with the restless activities of lusty enterprise, an empire in itself.

These splendid colonies, long the envy of ambitious nations who coveted their wealth and rich possibilities, were scarcely protected against the danger that so suddenly threatened them. A few ships lay in their waters, but on land there were only the volunteer and militia battalions,

who had now a first and unexampled opportunity to display their valour.

India alone was secure. That great country had for centuries attracted to herself the most daring enterprise and energy of England. The countless multitude of natives had been long won over to loyalty by wise government and by obvious motives of interest. But, threatened on all sides save the sea by enemies on its borders, India was occupied by what may justly be called the finest army in the world. The opportunities for active service it afforded showed the road to distinction, and most English officers who were fired by ambition or military ardour sought to find employment there. And thus by process of natural selection, all that was most brilliant and most resolute in the British military genius characterised the splendid army of India. Always ready for action, often called to the exercise of arms, experienced in every manner of warfare, it was enough to daunt the most courageous foe.

And daunt them it did. For Russia knew and feared the discipline and valour of the British troops in India. It was for this reason that she had treacherously concealed her participation in the great war. She hoped that the stress of circumstances might render necessary the withdrawal of the troops homeward for the purposes of defence. Thus shorn of her strength, India, as she fondly believed, would become a ready victim to her schemes.

England, indeed, had already to contend with the most exasperating difficulties so far as her colonial empire was concerned.

Whilst she knew that preconcerted attacks must be then in operation against every part of her empire, she had no means of communicating with them and giving instructions for the general scheme of defence. They were every one isolated, and the War Office was distracted at the formidable obstacles that lay in its path. There seemed nothing to do but rely on native resource. And yet, even then, there

could not but be much terrible dissipation of strength through lack of a general organised plan.

It was at this juncture of affairs that the British Government found, in the hour of need, a new and strange ally, whose aid was more valuable, inasmuch as it was given unconsciously.

On Friday morning Lord Salisbury was in consultation with Lord Lansdowne and the Commander-in-Chief at the Foreign Office when a well-dressed, somewhat nonchalant young man came along Whitehall, walking at a brisk pace.

His keen eyes, his face, thin and a trifle sallow, his quick and restless manner, all betokened the American. Mr. Henry P. Chauncey had indeed crossed the water only six months back to undertake the responsible duties of London correspondent to the New York *Globe*. His piquant and brilliant articles had already made him well known in journalistic circles, and the power of his pen and the journal in which he exercised it had made him a welcome addition to London society.

He turned as he got to the Foreign Office, and sprang lightly up the steps. Advancing to the inquiry room, he stirred up the clerks considerably by what appeared to them to be the most audacious request in the history of English politics.

"I want to see Lord Salisbury," he said coolly.

The clerk he addressed looked at him in amazement. He almost expected him to faint at such an announcement.

"Lord Salisbury!" he stammered. "What are you thinking of? You must be mad."

"I reckon not," replied the American. "Take him this card. I represent the *Globe*."

"The *Globe*!" exclaimed the clerk. "I don't care if you represent the Universe! What next? Do you think Lord Salisbury is going to admit reporters to his conferences?"

"Look here, young man," insisted Mr. Chauncey, "I have

no time for a general debate on hypothetical questions. I don't think you know the methods of American journalism in this sleepy institution. You're a clerk here, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Then kindly do what I ask you. I'll take the consequences."

"But Lord Salisbury is engaged on urgent war business."

"He is?" exclaimed the American gleefully. "Why, that's exactly what I want to see him about. Just you skip in and tell him the representative of the New York *Globe* requests an audience, and that he'll not keep him five minutes."

The clerk staggered off as if in a dream. Never had such a thing been heard of. The message was delivered, and the trembling official waited outside the door prepared to be summarily kicked downstairs.

Lord Salisbury was by this time alone. The War Minister and the Commander-in-Chief had just left for Pall Mall.

He was pondering over an awkward problem which had puzzled all three when Mr. Chauncey's visit was announced. He turned the card over automatically in his hand for a moment, and then suddenly his eye lighted up. His cheek flushed as he rose from the chair.

"Bring Mr. Chauncey here at once!" he ordered. The clerk, amazed, stared at him blankly a moment, then turned quickly on his heels, and, subdued and deferential, though seemingly overwhelmed, he ushered the journalist into the Prime Minister's private room.

The great statesman met him with grave courtesy.

"Sit down, Mr. Chauncey," he said. "Such an interview as this is extraordinary, and, I should think, unparalleled."

Mr. Chauncey bowed.

"The New York *Globe* is honoured," he said, and his alert mind conjured up the most startling "exclusive" that America had ever known.

"I do not know," continued his lordship, "whether you are aware what the precise position of yourself and your colleagues is in this country at the present moment."

"My lord," replied the journalist with quiet dignity, "I am quite aware of it. If you choose to regard our presence here as likely to militate against the safety of England you would be justified in requesting us to leave."

"That is so," replied the Premier. "But you need fear nothing. I believe in candour to the Press. It is too mighty a power for us to affect to neglect or despise it. What I propose is this—and I ask it as a favour. You shall call each day at the Foreign Office, where certain *bona-fide* and important news shall be given you. Call later on, sir, and an official shall give you such news as I can afford to make known. I shall trust largely to your discretion. A journalist of your standing and experience needs no word of caution."

Mr. Chauncey was profuse in his thanks, and was almost inclined to pity the *Reporter*. Lord Salisbury also had reason to be satisfied with the result of the interview.

Next day war intelligence from American papers was flashed over the entire globe, save to South and East Africa, which alone were unconnected. And with it was dispatched the following simple paragraph :

"The Minister for War has sent to every Colonial Governor, where possible, a cable containing the single word 'Britannia.' At the Admiralty, word is hourly expected from Canada announcing that the fleet stationed there has sailed for England."

This item of news was read in all English colonies and dependencies, and the cabalistic word, making the message obviously authentic, was read aright by British representatives, who grasped at once the stratagem that had been used. And thus in a moment the British dominions were prepared for the shock of war and knew the line of defence.

It was the first time in the history of nations that a Prime

Minister had recognised the value of journalism as a force in war, and had used its stupendous organisation to save the fortunes of an empire.

The gallant deeds of the Mediterranean fleet found fitting counterpart in the national enthusiasm which prompted England to cheerfully embark upon an enterprise chiefly remarkable for its spirit of heroic self-sacrifice.

None knew so well as the leaders of the people the desperate nature of the struggle to which they were committed. Men and money must be lavished in the attempt to crush, once and forever, the gigantic confederacy which had so suddenly sprung into existence.

The Council of National Safety early decided that the public must be made to realise fully the tremendous odds against which they fought, believing that this step would render clear the necessity there was for the drastic and far-reaching methods of organisation which alone might serve to assure the ultimate victory of the United Kingdom.

At a meeting, therefore, over which Lord Salisbury presided, the Prince of Wales being present as an ordinary member, the following proclamation was drawn up:

“ TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

“ The declaration of war by France and Germany is an open avowal of the determination of these two countries to destroy the empire of Britain. This wholly unjust and iniquitous conflict has been forced upon us in a manner which has already called down the vengeance of the God of Battles.

“ Under such conditions our duty as citizens of the British Empire is unmistakable. We must resolve to crush those who would crush us, and not desist from our task until we have effectually secured the peace of Europe upon a permanent and proper basis.

“ The Council of National Safety believe that the most effective method of illustrating the magnitude of the task

imposed upon England is to set forth in simple figures the war strength of the Allied Powers so far as their land forces are concerned. At sea, England has shown that she can deal with them, but the necessity for invading both France and Germany make it imperative that there should be no under estimation of their fighting establishment.

“ France, then, has an army of two millions of men, with nearly 150,000 horses and 3000 guns. Half a million of her troops are actually under arms; the balance will probably be called upon the moment we assume the aggressive, and by summoning her territorial reserves she can place 3,000,000 of men in the field.

“ The army of Germany in the field consists of over half a million of men, which can at once be increased to 1,500,000, with 312,000 horses and 2800 guns. The mobilisation of the reserves more than doubles her fighting force.

“ We are therefore called upon to face *six millions* of trained soldiers, with 462,000 horses and 5800 guns.

“ At this moment there are under arms in Great Britain and Ireland some 500,000 men, including regular troops, volunteers, militia, and army reserves, with 1000 guns and 15,000 horses.

“ It is proposed forthwith to double the number of men, guns, and horses. The guns are in store, the horses are being purchased, and we call for 500,000 young men, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, to volunteer for war service immediately.

“ The Commander-in-Chief estimates that he will thus be enabled to land expeditionary forces of sufficient strength for the first advance on the shores of France and Germany within a few days.

“ We also call upon the nation to enroll 3,000,000 of men in addition to the expeditionary forces already detailed, in order to reinforce the armies abroad to such an extent as may be deemed necessary, and to provide for the defence of the United Kingdom in case of further attack.

“ It will be the duty of lord lieutenants of counties to act with local authorities in selecting from registers of all men capable of bearing arms, first, the local levies for the immediate strengthening of troops under orders, and, in the second place, the further mobilisation of the Auxiliary Army of 3,000,000.

“ Sir Redvers Buller is charged with the conduct of this further mobilisation, and each line regiment in the service will provide a complete company of selected non-commissioned officers and men who will supply the nucleus for the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Auxiliary Army.

“ All local authorities should be guided by the following supreme considerations in discharging the onerous task imposed upon them:

“ 1st. The able-bodied unemployed should be drafted into the ranks of the army forthwith.

“ 2d. Single men should next be selected in preference to married men.

“ 3d. Care should be taken to interfere as little as possible with manufactures which by their nature contribute to the food supply and clothing of the nation.

“ 4th. Selected officers and men of the police force should be utilised to extend the supply of regular troops drafted for drill purposes into the Auxiliary Army.

“ 5th. Special local measures must be taken for the adequate preservation of law and order.

“ We cannot too strongly emphasise the fact that Great Britain is now fighting for her life, and that it is the duty of all her sons, without distinction of class or position, to devote every energy towards bringing the war to an early and successful termination.

“ Signed { SALISBURY.
ALBERT EDWARD.
W. E. GLADSTONE.
WOLSELEY.”

" 'There,' said the Commander-in-Chief, as he laid down the pen, " that proclamation means proscription."

" No," exclaimed Mr. Gladstone. " Proscription is compulsion. This is the call to arms of a free people. It is another prayer to the Almighty to set back the sun until we have conquered the enemies of human progress."

In the drawing-room of a house in Mayfair two girls were smiling through their tears whilst reading for the fiftieth time a pencilled note which had just reached them from Plymouth by the kindness of the captain of the *Peninsular*.

" I am quite sure that Frank is safe, dear," said Irene Vyne as she sank on her knees by the side of Ethel Harington. They were laughing and crying together over Rodney's letter from Malta.

" I am hopeful myself," replied her companion, " but I don't see how we can do more than hope. It was such a terribly dangerous undertaking."

" Oh, of course. I know that. But naval officers are accustomed to explosions. Boilers and guns and things are always bursting."

Captain Harington entered the room, hot, excited, and too full of his news to properly hook up his sword, which slipped and clanked against his spurs as he strode towards them.

" Give me a cup of tea, girls," he cried. " I 'm choked with dust and news. Rodney has blown up the Suez Canal and I have been appointed to Roberts's staff. We 'll be in France before the week is out."

Ethel looked at Irene to see how she would receive this momentous intelligence, but the girl's face only flushed a little, and her hand did not tremble as she brought the tea to her lover.

" I wish I was a man that I might also go," she said. " Anyhow, I will never forgive you if you don't send more lucid epistles than Frank has favoured your sister with." And she showed him the now almost illegible letter.



"GIVE ME A CUP OF TEA."

"Hello!" he said. "Poor old chap! He wept so copiously over the note that his tears have n't dried yet."

Ethel snatched the paper from him, and Irene coolly ignored his remark.

"How many men go with you?" she inquired.

"We start with 150,000. Once a landing is effected 200,000 more follow. Then we make a forward movement. The advance will be along the line of the Seine. How jolly glad I am that I did the trip from Paris to Havre last summer in a canoe."

"Will such an army be strong enough to act effectively?" said Irene, who, it must be remembered, was an ambassador's daughter, and knew exactly the numbers and efficiency of the French forces.

"To conquer France will need ten times as many," replied Harington, rising to depart. "But Lord Roberts thinks that the allies are hardly prepared for such a bold counter-move on our part. You must not forget that they lost the pick of the army of the north in the fight off Worthington, and our expedition, once it gains a footing, will be quite able to deal with the remainder of that Corps d'Armée at the outset. Of course they will try to smother us afterwards, but they may not succeed. Bobs will work off a few tricks on them that he learnt in Afghanistan."

"This will be a war of men, not of tactics," exclaimed Irene.

"Perhaps both," cried Ethel Harington. "Frank, I am sure, will fight well, but it was by cleverness that he was able to destroy the Canal." She was so desperately in earnest that the others laughed.

"Teddy Harington," said Irene, amusement struggling with emotion in her tremulous tones, "your sister will blow up that wretched streak of water ten times every day for the next month. If you don't go and do something big I will jilt you and marry Mr. Briggs, who actually left cards on us the day after we all came back from Paris."

And Briggs, William Briggs, of Catford—where was that cycling expert during these troublous times?

He was the hero of the Cat and Anchor, the lion of the cycling club, the darling of every new woman in that town on wheels.

But his soul had been fired by the events of that memorable night in the Gare du Nord and the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. The placid joys of puncture-proof tires and lever chains fascinated him no longer. Lord Eskdale's words rang in his ears. "You have indeed done your country a good turn," said the Ambassador, and the phrase haunted him. Could he not do England another—a million-billions of good turns—thought Mr. Briggs, by organising a corps of Catford cyclists, and offering their services to the expedition?

A list opened in the Cat and Anchor soon had fifty names. In the club it was quadrupled. Armed with this document he sought out Lord Eskdale, who brought his offer to the notice of Sir Redvers Buller, and ere many days were past his eyes danced in his head as they read the following extract from the *Gazette*: "To be Captain in the Auxiliary Army, William Briggs, cycle manufacturer, Catford, commanding the Catford Cycle Corps."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTURE OF HAVRE.

“ COMBIEN ? ”

“ Il y a onze cuirassés, cinq croiseurs, vingt-trois canonnières et—tonnerre de Dieu—plus de cent bâtiments de transport ! ”

“ Yes, yes,” interrupted General de Rosny impatiently, turning to the naval officer who was supplying him with this information. “ How many men ? They cannot land their ships.”

Lieutenant Lelièvre shut his glass with a snap, and an angry light came into his eyes as he fiercely inquired if Monsieur le Général intended to convey any slight to the French navy by his remark.

For a moment the soldier felt inclined to strike to the ground the irritable fool who chose such a moment for the nice consideration of phrases, but he mastered the impulse and explained that nothing was further from his thoughts.

Whereupon the mollified lieutenant informed him that by packing men on board ship to the utmost capacity, the English pigs could not stow away more than 150,000 troops on the armament, then some eight miles out at sea off the Cap de la Hève, and de Rosny forthwith rode off to the Fort de Frileuse where his staff were assembled.

Telegrams were promptly dispatched to the Second and Third Corps d’Armée at Amiens and Rouen. In both towns everything was in readiness, and train after train started for Havre conveying some 200,000 troops to the locality. Some 50,000 men were quartered in the barracks and fortifications of the town itself, whilst the others were

split up into two army corps, the first resting on Montivilliers and the second on Harfleur, both towns being within an hour's march from the outskirts of Havre, and connected therewith by two lines of rails.

Havre stands on the northern side of the estuary of the Seine and is very strongly fortified. The western, or sea face of the town, is protected by the powerful fort of Ste. Adresse and a redoubt near the Jetée du Nord. The harbour and docks are guarded by the citadel, Bastion de la Floride, and Fort de l'Heure, whilst the Fort de Tourneville and Fort de Frileuse, not to mention swarms of small redoubts and earthworks, provide serious obstacles in the way of a land attack.

But Lord Roberts, who was standing on the quarter-deck of the *Majestic*, to which fine vessel, Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Charles Beresford, had transferred his flag since the disablement of the *Magnificent*, had discussed every item of his programme in the office of the Commander-in-Chief before his departure, and was now engaged in giving his final instructions to generals of divisions and brigadiers. For the present, the information was not to be imparted to any other members of the expedition, but prior to actual operations every officer and private were to be made clearly cognisant of their individual posts in the collective programme.

It was Thursday afternoon, the day following the fight at Gibraltar, of which no tidings had yet been received by either party.

Six of the eleven ironclads, the *Majestic* leading, entered the ten-metre channel and steamed slowly onwards until within two miles distance from the Fort de l'Heure. The other warships at considerable intervals formed a cordon round the flotilla of transports and Cunard and White Star liners which had conveyed the troops from Southampton, and were now anchored in the roads out of range of practical gun fire.

The three French coast defence vessels, and a number of torpedo boats, were seemingly under orders to remain for the present behind the guns which protected the Avant Port, and in the Bassin de l'Eure and Bassin Bellot could be seen the masts of a great company of cargo steamers, evidently freighted with war material for the subsidiary move on England if the first attack had succeeded.

A tricolor floated proudly over the Bastion de la Floride, and the gunnery lieutenant of the *Majestic* asked permission to direct the first shot fired in the engagement—a shell from a 12-inch gun—toward the locality.

Never was gun laid more carefully. The excellent chart of the harbour in the officer's possession enabled him to accurately verify the distance calculation, three gunners declared the training perfect, and with a thunderous roar the first avenging missile sped over the waters and hurled a cloud of dust and masses of masonry over the railway line that runs along the rear of the fortification.

But it did more. It demolished the flagstaff and its supports, and a wild yell of delight rose from the British fleet as officers and men noted the fall of the French flag at the very outset of the engagement.

A stiff artillery duel now broke out between forts and ships, and the latter, by constantly changing their positions, were able to disconcert the aim of the gunners on land. Consequently they suffered little harm, whilst they were able to do considerable damage to the battery near the jetty and the Fort de l'Heure.

The *Salamander*, torpedo gunboat, early distinguished herself. Commander Eagles was ordered to make a reconnaissance up the estuary, and he actually steamed to within firing distance of Tancarville, nearly ten miles up the channel. The *Éclair* and *Vitesse* darted out of the Avant Port to cut her off, but were promptly sunk by the quick-firing guns of the *Majestic*, which had drawn closer in shore in anticipation of some such move, and this experience by the

enemy made easy the progress of the audacious *Salamander*.

Lieutenant Eagles, on his return, reported the massing of French troops at Harfleur, Confreville, and Videmare, information which precisely bore out the views held by Lord Roberts.

The night was clear and starlit. The moon, in her first quarter, struggled to aid the brightness that rendered objects discernible at a considerable distance, and even through the smoke and confusion of the bombardment it could easily be seen that the enemy expected an immediate attack.

But the men on board the transports were ordered to sleep, and, after much wonderment and growling at the unexpected inactivity forced upon them, tired nature soon rendered them oblivious of the thunderous cannonade which continued throughout the night.

As day broke over the coast line several of the remaining ironclads and cruisers, together with a dozen gunboats, joined the fighting line, and vigorously shelled the immense bodies of troops which had been drawn up during the night to repel the threatened invasion. Such wholesale carnage resulted, that the French commander speedily withdrew his men behind the shelter of the forts, and the latter, disregarding the heavy fire of the ironclads, did such destruction among the smaller vessels—one British cruiser and two gunboats being sent to the bottom—that the game might so far have been considered drawn.

But the forts themselves were in a sorry plight, and Lord Roberts's face wore a much more pleased expression than was warranted by the situation in the opinion of his men, stewed up as they were in the most uncomfortable fashion.

The day wore away without the slightest sign of definite movement, and beyond the knot of divisional and brigade commanders who knew the Commander-in-Chief's intentions, hardly an officer or private in the army but considered that a golden opportunity had been lost on the previous night,

whilst every lapsing hour gave the enemy more time to consolidate his position.

This view prevailed amongst the Frenchmen also, and perhaps the only man on shore who mistrusted the seeming hesitancy of the British was General de Rosny.

Delay in itself was irksome. It was now fraught with foreboding.

The physical and nervous strain upon his troops was not wholly to his taste, but, good and careful soldier as he was, he spent the time in supervising every detail of the defence from any possible point of attack, which, he was sure, would take place that night.

About seven o'clock in the evening, signals from the flagship to the troopships caused a flutter of expectation on all hands, to be followed by a feeling of profound astonishment as the flotilla, accompanied by a strong guard of ironclads and cruisers, bore off in stately procession towards the north-west, as though bound for Cherbourg.

"It is an infamous ruse—this bombardment—to draw our troops here and lay open some other locality," cried a French major of dragoons, as the strange manœuvre became known on shore.

"Where are we a-goin', Jack?" said a Tommy in the Grenadiers to a sailor who passed him on the lower deck of the *Teutonic*.

"We're a-headin' for Newfoundland, just now, an' it's five days at the best," was the answer.

"Of all the bloomin' chucks I've ever seen, this is the wust," roared Tommy, and the Grenadier Guards have never been nearer mutiny than they were when the rumour went round that the expected landing was not to be made.

So serious was the growl that it reached the ears of the commanding officer. He sent for the sergeant-major.

"Tell them," he said, "to eat a solid supper and smoke till they're black in the face, as they will have as good a fight before morning as the regiment has ever seen."

Then joy prevailed, and the fumes of nail-rod mingled in the breeze with the strains of "Annie Laurie."

General de Rosny was absolutely puzzled. He telegraphed to Paris, Cherbourg, Brest, and Le Mans, the headquarters of the Fourth Army Corps, whilst General Mercier, at the last-named place, spoiled the dinner of the officers of the 104th Infantry by an imperative message to entrain forthwith. General Saussier, the Governor of Paris, did not please De Rosny by ordering an immediate preparation for assistance to be given in the West. Altogether, Havre had more than the usual *mauvais quart d'heure* that evening.

But the bombardment proceeded as furiously as ever.

Lord Charles Beresford and Lord Roberts, with their respective staffs, were on the *Rattlesnake* gunboat, with the flotilla.

As darkness came on, the fleet now being well out at sea, a wheel to the right was ordered by a single rocket. The fresh course lay due east, and after an hour's steady steaming several rockets were sent flying into the sky.

At last, far ahead, came an answering signal, and the *Rattlesnake* darted to the front to slow down presently by the side of another huge flotilla of tugs, towing an immense number of flat-bottomed boats, whilst six of the tugs had in charge an immense object which looked like a gigantic pile of logs.

It was a floating pier, of which the sections had been joined together in Portsmouth Dockyard, and so fashioned at one end as to be capable of being driven a long way on to a sloping beach before it came to a standstill against the shore. Adorned with a great array of steam cranes, two lines of rails, a couple of small steam-engines and other equipments, it looked a quaint monster floating quietly on the waves.

An altered disposition having been made in the order of the fleet, the course lay S.E. by S., and by ten o'clock the light on the Cap de la Hève was seen on the starboard bow.

Lord Roberts was evidently about to land his forces on the coast at a point opposite the small village of Blèville, and attack Havre from the land.

At midnight precisely the 1st and 2d Battalions of the Grenadier Guards, commanded by Lieutenant-General Massy, Captain Harington being his brigade-major, pushed off from the side of the *Teutonic*, not a light being visible in the entire fleet, and pulled silently towards the beach.

The noise of the guns at Havre rose high over the placid beat of the surf on the shingle as the General sprang ashore, followed by Harington.

Without command or confusion the men at once spread themselves out over the lonely expanse of sand and pebbles, behind which rose the gloomy outlines of the neighbouring cliffs, and in a marvellously short space of time the whole of the 1800 troops were lost to sight and sound, leaving the General and his youthful companion standing near the empty boats to await the arrival of the next contingent.

This was made up of the 2d Battalion of the Black Watch; the 1st Brigade of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, the 2d East Lancashire, and the Aldershot Company of the Royal Engineers.

The three regiments, guided by Harington, and without the slightest attempt at formation, crossed the belt of shingle as quickly as possible, and soon struck a tolerably good road leading through a narrow valley to the table-land behind the cliffs.

It was a cheering sight to see the manner in which the sappers tackled the work of fixing the floating pier when this lumbering monster slowly bulged through the darkness and grounded one end upon the shingle, the tide being then on the ebb about two hours.

The shoreward section was hauled up by hundreds of willing arms until it was humanly impossible to bring it farther; the next section was dragged up to join it, and both were then firmly stayed to prevent slipping. Smaller and more

manageable pieces were drawn on shore from special lighters, and placed in position in front, and by this means a firm track was laid right up to the spot where the road led from the cliffs.

All this was accomplished in less than an hour, and meanwhile a very large number of men and horses had been landed, some 3000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry being drawn up on the plateau a mile inland.

Attempts at concealment were now abandoned, and the electric search-lights from the fleet showed every inch of the pier, the gradient of which was not so extreme as might be expected, as every artifice in construction had been used to counteract the rapid shelving of the beach.

The motive was soon apparent.

Two heavily-laden vessels came alongside, and gun after gun was hoisted from their holds, swung on to low trucks on the pier, and then hauled by the engines along the double lines of rails until the shoreward end of the pier had been reached. Here the artillery horses and gunners were waiting for them to limber up and trot off rapidly to their allotted station with the main body.

The wheels of both engines and trucks were provided with specially deep flanges, and as the gauge was a broad one, it was almost impossible for any derailment to take place.

The work went on uninterruptedly and without hitch. It was a triumph of organisation and forethought. Nothing had been forgotten, nothing miscalculated, and the senior officers in charge of the embarkation were familiar with every inch of the ground, as they had all visited the place during the winter and early spring.

By four o'clock some terrified peasants had reached the Fort de Tourneville and announced the landing of the British troops.

A telephonic message was sent to Fort de Frileuse, and General de Rosny galloped off at the head of his wearied staff to personally investigate the cause of the rumour.

He narrowly escaped falling into the hands of a scouting detachment of the 17th Lancers, and three of his aides lost their lives in stemming the rush made by the Death or Glory boys when they caught sight of the French officers.

De Rosny's frame of mind was not of an enviable cast as he raced back to Havre. He cursed himself and General Saussier and General Mercier and his cavalry vedettes with impartiality.

By the time he reached his outposts he had regained his normal senses and promptly set about the necessary dispositions to meet the new order of things.

His men were weary after thirty-six hours of sleepless watchfulness, but the splendid spirit of the French soldier returned at the thought that at last there was something to do beyond waiting idly under an incessant artillery fire.

Marching by parallel roads to Blèville and Sanvic Graville, over 100,000 troops were soon in motion, and as the first flush of early dawn suffused the horizon with pink and gold, the British cavalry outposts retired to acquaint Lord Roberts with the tidings of the advance.

The Commander-in-Chief had now 80,000 men massed on the undulating downs at the back of the cliffs, and nearly 200 guns, supported by 7000 cavalry, were in position.

The left wing of the British Army was the first to move. A deep ravine ran far into the land between the English position and Ste. Adresse, and it was Lord Roberts's intention to force the enemy into this difficult ground, which could be swept by the guns for a distance of nearly three miles.

The rapidity and dash of the French advance rather favoured this project. As the growing light spread over the landscape, and the masses of troops became more distinctly visible, shrapnel began to scream through the air, whilst the ping of the tiny bullets from the Lee-Metfords and the Lebel rifle sent a wild rush of tumultuous emotion through the hearts of those who heard the sound for the first time in actual warfare.

So far as could be subsequently ascertained, a private of the East Lancashire Regiment was the first man to give his life for his country. Ere long the casualties became more frequent, and soon a line of ambulance wagons were hastily carrying the wounded to the shore, whence they were ferried to the ships.

Britain was beginning to suffer.

To the 8th Chasseurs à Pied, led by General d'Aubigny in person, was given the honour of leading the attack on the British centre.

Their advance through Blèville had been skilfully covered by the 102d and 72d Infantry, who had thrown forward a thick cloud of skirmishers. These, however, hung back, owing to the very warm reception they were receiving from a body of troops which lined a narrow belt of trees fringing some brushwood at the base of the rising ground capped by ten field batteries.

D'Aubigny saw his chance of not only discomfiting the occupants of this favourable cover but also rendering the position of the artillery untenable by reason of the excellent mark they would offer to his men, firing at ease and in comparative safety at a distance of about 1000 yards.

Driving his feet home in the stirrups, dropping the reins on his horse's neck, with képi in his left hand and sword aloft, the handsome soldier turned round in the saddle and cheered his men on. The bugles and drums crashed in the *pas de charge*, the regiment gave a frantic shriek of exultation, and a wild dash was made over the intervening space of 200 yards.

An answering and deeper roar came from the trees, and the French rush had hardly commenced before the 42d Highlanders sprang out to meet them.

Once before—long years ago at Corunna—had the Black Watch crossed bayonets with Frenchmen whilst both regiments were charging simultaneously. Not for one instant had the result of that fearful clash of arms been in doubt,

and if the dim shades from the Peninsula had been able to witness the manner in which their successors hurled back the 8th Chasseurs à Pied they must have cried in ghostly glee : " Ah, the regiment never dies ! "

It was hardly fair to the Frenchmen to ask them to meet that charge.

By sheer weight alone they were driven to the earth as a terrier might be repulsed by a mastiff. General d'Aubigny's horse reared and fell on top of him, and Colonel Wauchope jumped his charger over his prostrate foe as he galloped furiously to the front to prevent the pursuit from being pushed too far. It was no part of Lord Roberts's plan to occupy Blèville—yet.

" Hech, mon, but this is a braw day for Galashiels," said an elderly sergeant as he followed his section back to the cover of the trees.

" They 're the 8th Chasseurs " (he pronounced it Chasseurs), said a private, turning over the body of a Frenchman with his foot. " D' ye ken the meanin' o' 't."

" It's an eediom," replied the sergeant, " but the Scoatch equeevalent is ' rinnin' awa'."

D'Aubigny, who was thought to be dead, was only stunned. When he regained his senses some hours later, the tide of battle had rolled over him, and he was able to escape northwards in the dusk.

The action became general by 8.30 a.m., and by 9 o'clock Blèville was very strongly held by the enemy. The French front was narrower than the British, owing to the mad haste with which troops had been hurried along the parallel roads coming up from the east of Havre.

General de Rosny, quickly perceiving that he was not getting the due advantage of his superior numbers, threw forward a strong force of cavalry and guns to turn the British left flank.

The guns, thirty-six of them, occupied a slight eminence on the extreme left of the British line, and opened fire with

shrapnel with such beautiful precision that half-an-hour of such work would practically destroy that wing.

Their cavalry at the same time delivered a front charge, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have proved sheer madness against British infantry in line of columns, but which was now a really brilliant piece of strategy whilst ranks were being thrown into confusion by the murderous hail of shrapnel.

But some such contingency had been foreseen, and an English cavalry division of 3000 sabres, led by Sir Baker Russell, in the uniform of the 13th Hussars, rode sharply out at the trot from behind the squares and went straight for the French horsemen. The 17th Lancers were in front, followed by the Blues, the King's Dragoon Guards, the Queen's Bays, and the 3d and 4th Hussars, two squadrons of the latter being left with Brigadier-General Massy to be used at his discretion, for the further protection of the left wing.

With an appalling crash the opposing masses of horsemen met in mid career. The gradient of the ground was slightly against the Englishmen, who, although they stopped and beat back the French, were compelled to fight every yard of the way, the outcome of this inequality in the manœuvring space being one of the most sanguinary cavalry fights on record.

At last the French were fairly compelled to turn tail and bolt, and the guns quickly limbered up, as they knew that the next move of the British mounted contingent would be directed against them.

It was absolutely imperative therefore that they should return, unimpeded, by the way they had come.

Massy knew what the cessation of fire meant. "For Heaven's sake, stop them," he shouted to Major Ramsay, who commanded the squadrons of Hussars, and no further directions were heeded.

The 4th bounded forward with a yell of delight, and Harington, who was mounted on a magnificent hunter, asked and obtained permission to go with them,

The guns were half a mile away, and the only practicable line of advance for the Hussars was rigidly circumscribed by a deep brook and a seemingly impassable belt of thick bushes.

The road followed by the guns crossed the front at a point easily distinguishable, and Major Ramsay swore a mighty oath as he realised that the French gunners must be able to pass that point before the 4th could reach it, ride they never so hard.

Harington also saw the difficulty, and in that moment, whilst a fleeting vision of Irene came before his eyes, all thought of the future left his mind. He was possessed of the one idea that those guns must be stopped, and he alone in that gallant company knew exactly how to do it. Nay, he alone could do it, for his horse would succeed where inferior animals must fail.

For the next five minutes, he said afterwards, he was mad.

Quitting the squadron, he took his horse a flying leap across the stream, landing on the opposite bank at a spot where the tall hedge offered a small opening.

The thoroughbred hunter scrambled up the bank, pushed through the fence, Harington's face and tunic being badly cut by the thorns, and in a second the pair were flying across country to diagonally intersect the French line of retreat.

So busy were the gunners in plying whip and spur that they never noticed this solitary horseman, who was approaching the narrow, deeply dyked lane along which they were thundering towards safety.

Leaping such obstacles as he encountered, Harington gained the roadway abreast of the leading gun. He charged the off-wheel horse with such an impact that the animal with his fellow wheeler and driver, was driven sideways into the ditch on the far side of the road. The sudden check on the traces brought down the four leaders, the gun overturned, and the next gun smashed into it before the drivers could avert the disaster.

The road was hopelessly blocked, and two minutes later the Hussars were fiercely engaged in capturing thirty-six guns.

Teddy wheeled his horse after the shock of the encounter, leaped back across the dyke, and the terrified hunter forthwith bolted for the British lines at a pace he had never travelled behind a fox.

Lord Roberts had keenly watched the whole incident through his field-glasses. Whilst the Hussars and gunners were settling the question as to the possession of the field pieces he ordered the left wing to swing round and the centre to attack Blèville.

The time had come for the crucial movement of the day, and Sir Baker Russell's superb charge, followed by Harington's daring exploit, had opened the way for it.

General Massy was congratulating the Grenadier officer on his escape when a galloper arrived from the Commander-in-Chief, requesting his presence at the earliest opportunity, and Teddy hurried off, his hunter by this time having had some of the steam taken out of him.

When he saluted Lord Roberts, the latter looked keenly at him and said: "Major Harington, I desire to congratulate you. I will have much pleasure in recommending Her Majesty the Queen to decorate you with the Victoria Cross."

Promotion on the field is the rarest and perhaps dearest honour a soldier can receive, and Harington's emotion prevented him from uttering a word in reply.

The Duke of York, who was with the Commander-in-Chief, also spoke to him in terms of warm appreciation, and Teddy was quite grateful to a man who asked him how much he gave for the bay horse he was riding.

By eleven o'clock the position of the French army was about as bad as that held by Napoleon's troops at Sedan. Although not surrounded, they were terribly cramped for room. Before the pitiless fire of the Lee-Metfords they were

fast losing men, and, what was worse, the *morale* of the troops was beginning to yield to circumstances.

Their superiority in field-guns was of no avail, as the roads were now hopelessly blocked, and more than half of their artillery was never in action. It could not get to the front. Excellent though the Lebel rifle was, it could not make such an impression upon the widely-spread English line as was produced by the continuous emptying of magazines by our troops into the dense masses of Frenchmen.

General de Rosny did not lose his head under these trying conditions.

He realised that he had been far too precipitate in the attack. Impetuosity and *élan* were of little avail against such a determined yet well-restrained foe, so he decided, too late, to fall back upon the line of forts, and give battle later in the day with fresh troops and with more skilful disposition of his forces.

He was a soldier of iron nerve and marvellous physique. Otherwise, he would never have succeeded in saving the lives of himself and several of his staff by pulling in a small boat over forty weary miles of the English Channel after the collapse of the attempted landing at Worthing.

But he miscalculated the most potent factor in warfare, whether ancient or modern, namely, human nature.

His men were weary, hungry, and dispirited. Want of sleep, want of food, and, above all, want of success, do not develop the best fighting qualities of the Frenchman. The order for retreat was a harbinger of disaster, and when the keen eye of Lord Roberts discerned the change—with the result that a series of desperate charges were pressed home by the British cavalry and infantry—the retreat became a rout, the French army lost all semblance of order, and the men plunged wildly into the one avenue of escape towards Havre, the ravine.

And during these desperate hours, where was the British artillery, whose motto is "Ubique," whose officers and men consider themselves the salt of the earth?

Only sixty of the two hundred guns available had come into action, and more than one experienced soldier had thought in the depths of his heart that Lord Roberts was not making sufficient use of his guns.

But when the French troops were streaming in tens of thousands into the broad and deep ravine, a hell fire of shrapnel and canister, at point blank range, was poured into them by 140 guns massed in a splendid position on the right flank, where they had up to that moment been comparatively useless.

The other guns limbered up and galloped furiously in the direction of Montivilliers, where, aided by the whole of the British cavalry, they were able to turn the flank of the second line of the retreat, and De Rosny, drawing rein on a hill near Sanvic, at last understood that a French army can advance, but it cannot retreat.

Haggard, gaunt, with exhaustion slowly conquering his physical force, and despair gnawing at his breast, the French Commander-in-Chief turned his bloodshot eyes upon an *aide-de-camp* who rode madly towards him from Havre.

It was yet little past noon. There was still hope ! Reinforcements had arrived from Amiens or Rouen ! Perchance an attack was about to be delivered on what was now the rear of the British line ! The cruisers from the Mediterranean were about to engage the British fleet ! Any of these things could retrieve the fortunes of the day.

"*Mon Général,*" cried the messenger, "*Nous sommes détruits.* The English are in Havre. They have occupied Harfleur, and the railway line beyond that point is blown up. The Forts de l'Heure and de Tourneville have fallen, and they are attacking the Fort de Frileuse. General Bonnemain says it is a question——"

De Rosny stared at the officer during this recital with the horror of absolute mental collapse in his gaze.

"There is no question," he cried. "I will at least make a second attempt to serve France !" and, drawing a revolver

from his holster, he blew his brains out before any member of his staff could interfere to save him.

At nine o'clock that morning Lord Roberts had heliographed a message to Lord Charles Beresford that all was well on land and that the enemy was developing the attack on the lines anticipated.

The Admiral immediately gave orders for the return to Havre of the fleet and remaining transports with troops on board, the latter steaming leisurely and accompanied by a number of tugs and flat-bottomed boats.

In an hour's time the full strength of the fleet was again engaged in the bombardment, and a reconnaissance pushed well home showed that the army corps at Harfleur, Confreville, and Videmare had hurried off in the direction of Blèville. The fort behind Ste. Adresse was silenced, and the battery, Bastion de la Floride, and Fort de l'Heure were in ruins.

Everything was ripe for the crowning blow.

Several gunboats advanced right into the Avant Port and vigorously engaged the citadel and the coast defence vessels, whilst thousands of troops made a dash for the Boulevard Maritime, the first landing being effected opposite the Hotel Frascati by the 1st Battalion of the 18th Royal Irish.

At the same time the tugs were rapidly towing a fleet of 300 boats, each holding 100 men, up the estuary to a point opposite the Vallée d'Oudalle, where a feeble opposition was speedily silenced by the fire of four cruisers, which had no difficulty in approaching close to the shore, as a high spring tide was now available.

The 3d and 4th Battalions of the King's Royal Rifle Corps were charged with the duty of seizing the approaches to Harfleur and Gainneville. They experienced a temporary check at the canal, but the 60th is seldom at a loss for expedients. Two barges were seized, placed lengthwise across the canal and lashed together, thus providing a capital bridge for the passage of infantry.

Major Vere gained the D.S.O. by leading a detachment of twenty men who swam to the other side and swung the barges under a heavy fire from troops advancing through the valley.

Some sharp fighting took place at this point and in the streets of Havre.

But the British forces considerably outnumbered their opponents at both places, and the spirits of the men had been raised to the highest pitch by the sounds of the inland battle, from which they had been debarred.

By noon a junction was effected opposite Harfleur, which was carried at the point of the bayonet, and Major-General Lord Methuen, who was in command, personally led a rapid advance upon the Fort de Frileuse.

Here a slice of luck aided the British troops.

The flight of fugitives through the main gate of the fortress had frightened a team of commissariat horses, and a bad smash-up of waggons jammed the drawbridge. Before the wreckage could be cleared, the Royal Irish Regiment dashed upon the guard, and in ten minutes all defence was at an end.

Some 8000 troops, under the guidance of Brigadier-General McCalmont, had been detached from the main Havre contingent and marched through the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Rue Thérèse, and Ingouville, towards the Fort de Tourneville, whose commander promptly capitulated, a feat for which he would have been shot had he fallen into the hands of his enraged fellow-countrymen afterwards.

By nightfall Havre was fully occupied, but there was no rest for the weary troops, who at once proceeded to throw up field fortifications on all the roads which offered easy access for troops coming from the north or centre of France.

The victory had cost England some 8000 men in killed and wounded, besides the loss of a cruiser and some gun-boats, but the official estimate of the French loss was 30,000, and no fewer than 42,000 prisoners were taken.

The most valuable prize that fell into the hands of the British was a park of artillery, 850 field-guns, with 400 rounds of ammunition per gun, which were stowed away on the vessels in the Bassin de l'Heure, together with a vast quantity of useful stores, in which the British army was sadly deficient owing to the haste in preparation for the invasion.

The only man in London who was not carried away by the exultation of the moment when news came of the occupation of Havre, was Lord Wolseley.

With characteristic caution he waited calmly until Lord Roberts's dispatch had arrived, and he then closely questioned the staff-officer who brought it regarding various passages in the longer report the latter had prepared.

Still the Commander-in-Chief's face wore an anxious expression. He passed some time at the United Service Club, and then returned to his rooms at the Horse Guards.

Realising that he could not sleep, and that departmental work was impossible at so late an hour, he took a small volume of *Plutarch's Lives* out of an inner pocket of his overcoat, and settled himself in an easy-chair with a cigar.

But ever and anon he started to his feet and paced the room with quick, uncertain strides, as the same perplexing problem presented itself to his mind. By sheer force of will he would resume perusal of the book and lose himself in its marvellous pages, until some chance allusion would again conjure up the difficulty which he had resolved to dismiss as impossible of solution until the next day should have passed.

On Sunday morning the Adjutant-General, on his way to the Horse Guards, encountered thousands of Londoners hurrying to church and chapel to return thanks to Providence for the victory vouchsafed to England, and to ask aid and sustenance in the future.

Entering Lord Wolseley's apartments he was surprised and alarmed at the haggard appearance of his chief.

"Have you had no rest?" he said, with some degree of perturbation.

"No. I have spent the night in reading and smoking and thinking—the latter unwillingly."

"Let me send out for some breakfast," said Sir Redvers Buller. "You must not allow yourself to run below par in this fashion."

"I will take some tea, thank you, Buller," replied the Commander-in-Chief, "but I can neither eat nor sleep until I have heard from Evelyn Wood. Roberts has won half the game; the other half is settled by this time, but we cannot know before to-night."



"I HAVE SPENT THE NIGHT IN READING, SMOKING, AND THINKING."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW GERMANY WAS OUTWITTED.

WHEN Sir Evelyn Wood was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Germany, he evinced no misgivings as to the enormous task intrusted to his charge.

He reported himself in due course at the Horse Guards, and commenced to discuss the plan of campaign with the utmost coolness.

"You have not been long in making up your mind on your scheme of attack," observed Lord Wolseley.

"It has been thought out for at least five years," was the grave but startling reply.

Lord Wolseley looked at him in astonishment.

"Sir," explained the gallant General, "I have deemed it my duty to make myself acquainted with both the strength and the weakness of the defences of every first-class power in Europe. War bursts out when least expected, and—to speak without arrogance—I have had my plans for the invasion of every country on the Continent complete and pigeon-holed for years."

"Perhaps we had better examine your scheme in conjunction with the suggested operations prepared by the Intelligence Department," was Lord Wolseley's reply. "But your zeal is worthy of you."

Sir Evelyn showed that he appreciated his chief's kindly words.

"I have my plans, it is true," was his courteous answer, "but I have not the genius to foretell precisely how they will fall out."

It was a delicate compliment to the most brilliant quality of the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Wolseley smiled, for compliments are rare things in the mouth of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the two soldiers proceeded to examine minutely the proposed method of attack upon the German coast.

For three hours they were closeted together in private conference, and when Sir Evelyn rose to depart, Lord Wolseley shook him warmly by the hand.

"It is an audacious stroke that you propose," he said; "certainly one that the enemy will not expect."

"That," Sir Evelyn replied, "is its chief claim to consideration."

The Commander-in-Chief nodded in agreement.

"It needs all the skill and daring of a brave and experienced officer," he observed quietly, "and we are fortunate in possessing such a man. The northern defence of Germany is terribly complete. From Hamburg to Dantzic the coast bristles with the strongest fortresses in Europe. But I have confidence in your plan despite its danger. God speed you."

And Sir Evelyn Wood departed to attend to the preliminary arrangements for one of the most desperate ventures in the history of the war.

About 200,000 men were detailed for service against Germany, together with a powerful fleet under the command of Sir Nowell Salmon, V. C.

The troops were formed of mixed battalions, for both the militia and the volunteers were drawn upon, and were massed at three great centres along the east coast. At Hull, the southern army corps, headed by the 1st and 2d Battalions of the Coldstream Guards, the 2d Battalions of the Buffs and the Royal Fusiliers, with the 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions of their attached militia and volunteers, formed a splendid brigade under the command of Lieutenant-General Guyon. The Northumberland Fusiliers, the York and Lancaster Regiment, the Yorkshire Regiment, and sev-

eral northern battalions gathered at Newcastle, whilst the Seaforth Highlanders, together with the Connaught Rangers and their militia, were noticeable among the troops massed at Leith. Few in numbers, indeed, this army was for its purpose ; but none could be finer in discipline, in record, or in reputation.

On Thursday morning a small but powerful fleet, under the command of Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon, left the Humber with half-a-dozen troopships and made its way in the direction of Tronning and the Kiel Canal. Scarcely had it reached the noble waterway that joins the Baltic and the North Sea, than, in the dusk of the evening, a strong contingent of warships, conveying an immense number of troopers, was noted by fishermen in the Kattegat steaming rapidly into the Baltic.

The most precise orders had been given to Sir Nowell Salmon. He was to attack the approaches of the Canal with as much fury as possible, and to keep up the fire without ceasing for three days. He was to make a feint of attempting to land troops ; but against the actual accomplishment of this he was strictly warned. -

" Why, I shall draw upon myself the entire German forces ! " exclaimed the Admiral when discussing with Sir Evelyn Wood the instructions received from the Admiralty.

" I trust so ! " said the General significantly.

With these strange orders the fleet had steamed across the German Ocean, and in less than a day came in sight of the fortress which commands the entrance to the Canal. The project on which they were embarked seemed to everyone fantastic.

Forthwith the authorities at Berlin received word that a strong detachment of the British Navy conveying many troopships, had appeared at the entrance of the Kiel Canal, and that Tronning was in imminent danger of capture. The defensive works had not been completed, the strength of the town was slight, and the activity of the English guns had

already made terrible havoc with the fortifications. One attempt had been made to land troops on the south side of the water, but it had failed owing to the gallantry of the German defence. But another was expected, and, it was feared, might succeed.

Chancellor Caprivi laughed at the news.

"We must be thankful," he exclaimed, "that daring and stupidity are closely knit. The enemy is good enough to deliver herself into our hands. There is no ally more useful than over-confidence in the foe!"

Shortly after dusk on the night when a powerful German army was concentrated at the entrance to the Kiel Canal, the British Fleet had crossed the western bend of the Baltic, and, but for a haze over the sea, might have descried upon the horizon the lights of the town of Stralsund.

A small, irregular, and ugly place, with narrow, ill-paved streets and all the gloom of squalid decline, sole amongst its virtues Stralsund possessed a spacious harbour, into which vessels of fifteen feet draught might proceed safely, and with ample accommodation in its entrance channel for the biggest ships afloat. Across the straits lay the island of Rugen, and, midway, the tiny island of Danholm dotted the water, heavy with fortifications.

Stralsund lay amid marshes which could only be traversed by broad roads built upon reclaimed land, with occasional bridges across water spaces. Thus isolated, it seemed a spot which no man would dream of attacking. And so, indeed, the German generals had considered; for they had not hesitated to weaken its garrison by drafts taken to form the force that attempted to invade England, and still later for the army that menaced the little fleet at Tronning.

Its guns commanded the sea, its morasses and lakes cut off the foe by land. So secured, a handful of men, it was reasoned, should be enough to defy the world.

It was this strange place, Stralsund, with its island, its

shallow harbours, its marshes, and its fortress, that Sir Evelyn Wood had decided to make his point of attack. Here he would set foot upon German soil.

The favouring darkness shrouded the fleet as it sped silently upon its way. The General knew that in six hours the fate of his daring swoop upon the German coast would be irrevocably determined.

His scheme was indeed audacious, but one element was in his favour. The depth of water enabled him to creep in close to the shore, and he felt confident that he would be able, before the enemy realised what had happened, to land a strong brigade of cavalry and two batteries of horse gunners upon the coast some five miles from the line of fortifications.

He summoned to him Colonel Sir S. W. Lockhart.

"Colonel Lockhart," he said, "we have reached the crucial point in a desperate adventure. All now depends upon individual courage. I have chosen you to command one of the finest brigades of cavalry that the British army could put under one man's charge. Upon your pluck and that of your men is staked the complete success of my plan of operations."

Colonel Lockhart flushed with pleasure.

"Stralsund," continued the General, "is a very strong place. It might appear impregnable. It has so appeared to the German commander. I will not deny its extraordinary advantages, but, Colonel, these very advantages may be applied to effect her ruin. It is to secure this that I am going to disembark your brigade. I will give you the Scot's Greys, the Carabineers, and the 1st and 2d Life Guards. With them go D and E batteries of the Horse Artillery. You will find, shortly after gaining the shore, that a strong, broad, military road, built on the treacherous soil, leads to Stralsund. The town at its rear is connected by bridges with the solid country that stretches beyond the morass. These bridges make attack difficult from land. But they also make escape impossible if they are taken and a double fire is opened on the town."

"I comprehend your plan," assented the Brigadier.

"Your duty, sir, is, at all hazards, and at all sacrifices, to take possession of those bridges, to hold them, and then storm the town. If you do so, I will guarantee that an English army corps shall be on German soil to-morrow. Fail, and we are routed, expelled, disgraced. There is no alternative."

"If hard riding and indifference to consequences can effect your purpose, sir," replied the Colonel proudly, "you may rely upon the British cavalry doing so."

"I know it. I believe you," answered Sir Evelyn, a little affected. "Go : I shall open fire on Stralsund and upon the island. Under cover of my guns you will land and carry out your movement. Good-night. We will meet at Stralsund to-morrow."

Thus speaking he dismissed him.

By this time the night had come, dark and perplexing, for great clouds rolled along the skies and swallowed up the young moon. Little more than five miles off lay the unconscious town with its empty harbour, whilst from the shore the melancholy wastes of humid earth stretched lonely and silent toward the gentle pasture-lands of Mecklenburg. Stralsund seemed a town in a wilderness—the one secure spot rescued by adventurous man from surrounding horror.

The larger vessels steamed slowly on. Opposite the landing point the sea was alive with boats laden with a freight of men, horses, and guns. Amid such silence as was possible the sturdy craft bore to shore the gallant heroes who were to stake their lives upon the hazard of a chance.

As the third fleet of boats moved off, there came a deafening roar in front. The *Royal Arthur* had already opened fire upon Stralsund.

Roused so rudely from stagnant security, the town became conscious of an unexpected and deadly foe attacking her from her own waters. In a moment fortress and island were alive with soldiers dazed by consternation and bewilderment.

And now answering booms declared the challenge accepted. England and Germany were engaged at last.

Amid the din and the terror and all the fury of the shock of arms, the brigade had landed upon foreign soil, unnoticed, unopposed. As the gunners of Stralsund were firing wildly out at sea, a swift and silent avalanche of gallant men was rushing down to destroy the only hope of succour from the mainland.

The darkness of the night and the roar of the guns booming across the sea favoured the landing. The wind was now high, and the clouds that scuttled over the skies rendered the fitful light of the moon uncertain and confusing.

The cavalry made their way slowly over the shingly beach. Fortunately it shelved but slightly, and the guns were dragged up without much delay; but Colonel Lockhart, when he gained the plateau, could not suppress a feeling of anxiety.

As far as the eye could reach through the gloom stretched the bare plain, without protection or shelter. The troops had been landed near Clausdorf, which lay in their rear. Along the shore ran a narrow road, threading its slender way over shifting grounds and dangerous stretches of marsh land until it reached the village of Prah.

Here, Lockhart knew, the military road started, a broad well paved highway, suited alike for soldiers and artillery. Built with all the precision of a Roman street, without deviation of any sort, it gave a safe passage into Stralsund.

Unluckily, this road lay along the coast, and entered the town at a northern point. It was essential to strike off at some point midway, and proceed in a more southerly direction, in order to gain the Tribseer Damm. This *chaussée* linked Stralsund with the mainland, and was, from its very security, the safest road for the purpose of an unexpected attack upon the town.

It was clear that, to begin with, the movements of the brigade would be tedious and difficult. As the men clam-

bered up to the rough bridle-path, they found that strict discipline would be impossible. The road was uneven, and on both sides lay the treacherous ground that threatened danger to those who were unfortunate enough to get entangled in it. To add to the peril, the horses were fresh and excited, after their long confinement, and could with difficulty be restrained within the inadequate space at command.

Aided by the darkness, moving at a snail's pace, wary and alert, the brigade slowly covered the dangerous ground, and after tedious delay reached Prahn.

It was a small village, ill lit, and almost deserted. But the eyes of the soldiers gleamed as they saw the broad, high road that ran through it, wide, well-paved, and strong.

There was now no time to lose. Everything depended upon dispatch.

"Captain Lugard," hurriedly directed the Brigadier, "take forty men and form a cordon around the village, and prevent anyone leaving it to give alarm. Follow us in ten minutes."

So saying, he gave orders for the brigade to form up in fours, and make at full gallop along the highway leading up the railway line, which lay to the south of Stralsund and gave excellent approach to the dam.

There were a few soldiers at Prahn. They had gone out from the barracks earlier in the day, and were drinking in the tavern there. As the Englishmen dashed by the *bierhaus*, the horses' hoofs clattering on the stony street, and drawing fire as they struck the cobbles, some of the Germans turned sleepily out, half dazed by drink, and gazed in stupid wonderment.

But Captain Lugard seized their arms without further ado, and it was impossible for them, even if they had the sense, to give the alarm.

Across the road, and along by the low lines of cottages that stretched to the north, the forty horsemen stood, ready to intercept any villager who might seek to make his way to Stralsund. The distance by road was very short, and the

Captain guessed that the brigade would not only meet obstacles when they left the highway, but be delayed by narrow paths until they reached the railway. It was a question of minutes, and a fleet-footed messenger might, without difficulty, make his way to the town along the direct road and give timely warning.

Meanwhile Lockhart's brigade swept along the board road at a furious rate. In the hearts of officers and men alike there rose the joy of soldiership, the thrill of excitement and desire for battle.

About a mile and a half from the town they turned away into a lane hedged on both sides by young hawthorn, which shook its trembling dew as the brigade passed along. A belated countryman who was strolling homeward jumped terrified into the hedge as he heard the thundering clatter of the horses' hoofs and saw the cavalry fly past; nor did he venture forth again till daylight gave him courage and his wits returned.

Soon the brigade, dashing up the shelving embankment, gained the railway, and crossed it, rapidly re-forming on the southern road that ran parallel with it. They sped along with reckless haste, each horseman with drawn sword, and the column in perfect order.

They could see the lights of the outer town twinkling on either side of them; but although the alarm was raised it was impossible to send the news on ahead, and when the Englishmen reached the station and had swept onwards beyond it, they found that there were no preparations to meet them.

The gates of the inner town were open, and the drawbridge by which entrance is gained to the fortifications had not been raised. The reason was obvious.

Over the *chaussée* there poured a disorderly multitude of men and women, terrified at the sudden descent of the British vessels, and making off as rapidly as possible to the station, whence they sought to fly inland.

There was not a moment's hesitation on the part of the

cavalry. With a ringing cheer they dashed over the dam, and almost before the Germans were aware of their presence, they had cut down the guard, seized the gate, entered the town, and possessed themselves of the defensive works. The Brigadier dispatched Colonel Olcott along the eastern road with Conway, of the 2d Life Guards, who knew the town, and a strong detachment of the Greys, and after leaving a guard to keep the gate, flung himself at the head of the main body of his troops into the Neuer Markt.

He was careful also to send up a signal of three white rockets, thereby informing Sir Evelyn Wood that the first part of his mission had succeeded, and that he had gained an entrance into Stralsund.

It was fortunate he had left Captain Lugard behind.

When that gallant officer felt himself justified in leaving Prah—*as impatient to share the glory of the attack as his men*—he led his troop at a hand gallop along the route the main body had taken. When he reached the railway he observed that a large signal-box stood beside the line. Happily inspired, he dismounted with a few of his men, forced the door open, and seized the signalman as he was busily engaged at the telegraph instrument, which was forthwith smashed.

A few minutes later he had wrecked the points of the railway, and thus had cut off communication by either medium with Berlin and the outlying country. Then, after an impetuous race, he entered the gates of the town and joined the attacking party.

By this time the Germans had recovered from the shock which this unexpected movement had caused. There was not a large force in Stralsund, and most of the men were engaged at the batteries along the seashore. But Commander Schwiftzeit hastily got them together and hurried along the Ossenreierstrasse in the direction of the Tribseer Damm.

His movement was a fatal one. The position of the Brit-



"WITH A RINGING CHEER THEY DASHED OVER THE DAM."

ish force was superb. As the Germans advanced along the broad street that entered the Neuer Markt, a terrible fire was opened by the British artillery, which was placed at the entrances of the three streets converging at this point. A deadly and resistant torrent of canister and Maxim bullets tore along, mowing down the Germans in horrible carnage.

Deprived of shelter and open to a ceaseless fire, they had no alternative but to retreat as rapidly as they could.

But a new calamity now awaited them. When they had reached the Rathhaus, a second fire was opened upon them from the Badenstrasse, which intersected their path at right angles. This came from Colonel Olcott's men. They had dashed along the eastern line, turned into the Eillerstrasse, and lay in wait for the enemy near the Nikolaikirche.

Thus raked by two converging fires, the Germans fell in hundreds. Unable to withstand the fierceness of the attack, their ranks were thrown into pitiful confusion, and they fled in irrecoverable rout. Now was the time for the impatient cavalry.

"Trot! gallop! charge!" successively rang out the voice of Colonel Lockhart, and along the street the fine English horse dashed with impetuous force, decimating the flying foe, and driving them before their sabres to right and left in straggling and helpless fragments.

Only a few minutes had elapsed, so rapidly was the British attack concentrated and completed. The whole of the town remained in the hands of the invaders.

Nor did the Brigadier delay to make his victory complete.

Galloping along the Badenstrasse, the artillery took up their position in the right rear of the batteries which were even then firing at the British vessels.

Here the remainder of the Maxims was unstrapped and aligned. In a few seconds a deadly rain of bullets was pouring obliquely along the line of the fortifications, sweeping down the gunners and clearing the embrasures.

Standing on the bridge of the *Royal Arthur*, Sir Evelyn Wood was gazing earnestly through his glasses at the harbour and canal of Stralsund. He knew that the town had been taken. There remained but a little hard fighting before his brilliant and audacious attack would prove completely successful.

Suddenly a rocket darted up from the chief bastion, a rocket of red, which was twice repeated. And as suddenly the guns of the fleet became silent in their attack on the town.

A gleam of satisfaction lit up the Commander-in-Chief's eye, for what he had anticipated had occurred. A great shell whizzed through the air and fell, not upon a British vessel, but upon the fortifications of Dänholm. Stralsund itself was engaged in a deadly attack on the island which defended it.

So far he had kept the fleet out of harm's way, firing upon the opposing forts, but not approaching nearer than was absolutely necessary.

But now the ships steamed on ahead to north and westward of the island, and coming in close to shore opened a devastating fire upon its forts.

Meanwhile, under cover of the battery at Stralsund, through the smoke and confusion, the transports made a rapid dash to the harbour. Here in the spacious canal they rested in safety, and whilst the guns at Dänholm were contending desperately but in vain with those of the fleet, the British army quietly disembarked.

At dawn on the following morning the forts at Dänholm were crippled and useless. Stralsund was occupied by the British army, and 200,000 Englishmen lay encamped on German soil.

When the *Royal Arthur* steamed majestically into port a ringing cheer was sent up, which was repeated when the Commander-in-Chief met Rear-Admiral Dale on the quay and took his hand in a fervent grasp. Soldiers and sailors alike were in a state of elation.

"Say, Bill," observed an A.B. reflectively to a mess-mate, removing a black pipe from his lips, "I've been a-studying these 'ere placards, and, as far as I can make it out, we 're only about five hours' steam from Berlin."

Bill discharged a narcotic stream at the poster, and answered :

"Blest if them deluded Germans would n't be doing a good thing for themselves if they allowed us to go comfortably by train. Lord, what trouble it would save us and them !"

The same notion had struck Midshipmen Napier and Chance of the *Royal Arthur*. They had prowled around the town after breakfast in search of diversion, and had made their way to the railway station.

Napier's face lighted with glee as he stepped up to the booking-office, where some terrified officials had ensconced themselves.

Poking his head through the ticket-window and looking benevolently on a clerk who was crouching down by the fireside, he said in excellent German :

"Two hundred thousand first-class tickets to Berlin, please ; *not* returns."

But no one offered to execute this magnificent order, and the middy turned away with a look of disgust.

"And they call themselves a commercial nation !" he exclaimed to Chance. "We offer to give them a ten per cent. dividend on the entire stock in five minutes, and they refuse the favour !"

"Never mind," replied his brother middy laconically ; "they 'll probably be glad enough to book the return order in Berlin !"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIVIDED STATES.

FRANCE was the honoured ally of the States. No treaty held them to a common union, but from the remote time when America had claimed from Britain her independence, France had given aid to the sister republic and had fought for the establishment of a new and powerful nation.

True, Americans were of English blood. Our history and our literature were theirs. They spoke a common tongue. The ties of kinship held the mother country and her giant colony in a bond that could not lightly be broken. But were these elements sufficient in themselves to keep alive the flame of mutual sympathy ?

Time would doubtless show. Meanwhile there was this significant fact : In her brief history America had known one foe only outside her own dominions. Her struggle had been with Britain.

When the American schoolmaster sought to inflame his pupil with pride in his country's greatness, or with the fervour of patriotic feeling, it was to this one great national effort that he turned for example. The Englishman was the enemy—England's unjust laws the offence. It was the red coat who figured in the history books, in the drama, in fable, and in story, as the representative of what was hostile, proud, and arrogant ; he it was who was invader and destroyer. It was in victory over him that national virtue first became manifest and the nation itself first founded. And through all these troublous times the American schoolboy

learnt that whilst England was the foe, it was France who was the friend.

And when, triumphant and secure, the American Republic had shown what marvellous resources there lay in its sturdy strength, and had become, in an incredibly short space of time, one of the chief powers of the world, it was France who sent congratulations and a gift. The colossal statue of Liberty, which dominated the harbour of New York, seemed to be an everlasting memorial of the deadly struggle with Britain, and of the generous aid which an equally young republic had sent across the waters.

Every reason that history could give tended to attach the sympathy of America to France. And that country expected it, awaited it, and was certain of it.

Early in May a full meeting of the American House of Representatives mustered at the Capitol. A strange rumour had spread in the morning that an important announcement was to be made, and there was little difficulty in guessing its subject.

No wonder, therefore, that of the 356 delegates, 330 were present at the opening of the House.

Prayer was solemnly pronounced amid the ill-concealed and impatient movement of the expectant throng. The Speaker then rose, and informed the profoundly silent House that he had received that day from the President of the Republic, a message, which it was his duty to read to the assembled delegates of the United States.

In clear tones and measured utterance he proceeded to read it out.

It was scarcely of that formal character expected of official or diplomatic utterances ; but one merit it undoubtedly possessed. There was no mistaking its meaning. It was clear to crudeness.

After rehearsing the principles laid down by previous American statesmen as those which should govern the international policy of the States, the President declared that

there was no consideration which could draw America into European complications except the instinct of self-defence. It was her plain duty to remain neutral.

"I have carefully considered with the Secretary of State," he went on, "the circumstances which have led to the war between Great Britain and her neighbours, and we can see no reason why the United States should be expected to interfere and compel the three nations to submit to her arbitration."

Cheers greeted this announcement. But it was noticed that the French and German Ambassadors, who were both present, turned angrily to each other and exchanged a glance of mutual disdain.

But the chief point of the message lay in its final words :

"When, however, the war is concluded and terms of peace are being arranged, it will become the duty of the United States, as protector of the Western Continent, to insist upon a hearing. The fate of Canada cannot be without concern to us. It will be imperatively necessary to warn off any encroaching power who may hold before itself the hope of securing a foothold in America. No European government can be permitted to take possession of Canada.

"What then is to become of the Dominion? Stretching as she does between the two great territories that form the United States, it is clear that geographical fitness must decide the question. America has a logical claim to Canada. The pacific policy we have pursued of grouping under one great banner all the scattered territories of this continent will here once more be justified.

"In a word, the United States will take Canada unto herself, and inaugurate within it a new era of peace and prosperity which that unfortunate and misled province so sadly needs."

There was much cheering as the message came to a close, and eager voices claimed a hearing. It was true that there were some protests, some remonstrances, from moderate men.

But the war spirit aflame in the youthful nation, that had scarce learned the bitter lesson of statecraft, was too strong, and the President was acclaimed as the "iron hero of American progress."

Additional point was given to the discussion by the declaration of a prominent member that "when the United States had given the blessings of her protection and her government to all the territory of North and South America, it would become her glorious mission to establish the principles of arbitration amongst the nations of Europe, and force them to voluntarily accept impartial tribunals in all disputes arising between them."

There was much excitement in the American Press on the following morning, and cartoons of a character insulting to Great Britain were not lacking. Only one important journal assumed a calm and temperate tone.

The New York *Globe*, in a somewhat caustic article, warned the American people that if they were "too eager to secure more stars, they should not forget that they might have to take the stripes also."

But in Canada public indignation knew no bounds. Never was the loyalty of the Dominion so much needed, never so vigorously shown.

During the next few days—maddened by the contemptuous allusions of the President to the fate of the great English colony, a large number of volunteers assembled on the frontiers, and declared their intention of stamping out any overt acts of violence which American freebooters might make. Everywhere young and active men came forward, keen and ready to enlist their services for war either at home or abroad.

But excited as American politicians were, madness of quite a different kind reigned in Wall Street.

The message of the President had come as a thunder-clap to the rich speculators and stockholders of New York. European war was bad enough ; and already the commercial

world was shaken to its foundations. But his open menace to England convulsed the market, and a terrible panic set in.

Men hurried to and fro in wild tumult, and violent words clashed in angry debates. The great leaders of finance were gathered in their strength, and, though silent, showed by flushed cheek and nervous movement their anxious concern in the news continually flashed along the cable.

On 'Change, a small knot of Germans—disregarded and shunned—scowled upon the scene, looking half threatening, half amazed.

One of them, a rich broker named Dumpfstadt, approached Mr. Stonyman, who, pale and erect, stood near the rostrum.

"Zis is von great hullaboo," he forcibly exclaimed. "Is not ze Vaterland goot frents to your beeble? Vy you ze Englichen thus so vid unfairness sympathise vid? Are de Deutsch here not also citizens of ze starred stripes?"

Stonyman turned on him a quick look of disgust.

"Go away and learn English, you German blackguard," he said, "if you want to talk with me, and come back in a year."

"You lofe nicht fair-play," stammered the German.

"Fair-play!" exclaimed Stonyman. "Look here, you fool. I am not a man of sentiment. I have little time to feel for my own country, let alone for others. But do you German thieves know what it is you are trying to do? I am a business man, and I speak in a business way. The fortunes of America are bound up with those of England. If England is beaten in this war there will be universal ruin throughout the States. She is our best customer, she carries our goods, our money is invested in her stock. What do we care if France or Germany is buried in your petty ocean? We, the business men of New York, cannot afford that England should be beaten."

"You are one brafe man," sneered the German. "And vat will you do?"

"Do?" Here Stonyman moved forward as though he

intended to reduce the German nation by one person at least. "I will show you what we will do. Gentlemen," he exclaimed to the interested group that had gathered round, "listen to me. Our fortunes are at stake. We cannot let the English nation suffer defeat. Do not let us be led away by sentiment. We must save our possessions. I for one am not going to be beggared for jingo patriotism. This rascal asks us, the merchants of New York, what we can do. My reply is this: I will purchase ten million dollars' worth of the new British stock."

At his words a cheer was raised, and the excitement grew.

Then Mr. Gorman, after shaking Stonyman by the hand, mounted the rostrum and made an earnest speech, calling on them all to support the finances of England.

"I add my own ten millions," he declared. "Let us send England our money. It will be the best investment we have ever made. Our gold will keep her armies in the field and give them victory, and we shall save our falling interests throughout the world. Timid and blind is he who will not give a little to save much." There was a tumult of applause and in a moment the two financiers had headed a list with twenty millions of dollars. In half an hour two hundred millions had been subscribed. And that night a cablegram informed the English Chancellor that no less than forty millions sterling was on its way to take up a corresponding amount of the newly-created stock.

Indeed, the position of England from the mercantile point of view was exceedingly happy.

War depends on conditions that seem remote, and lie far below the surface. It is a question of money, food, and a thousand other things, and many a battle is won in the kitchen or in the counting-house. Everything conspired to make England strong where her enemies were weak. Her consols were taken up with avidity by thousands of people whose stake in her security was too great to be left to fate. Rothschild and the principal bankers had thrown their

money into the war-chest. These men had to make up their minds from very self-interest—in a struggle that must be so terrible in its consequences—on which side they were prepared to throw in their lot, and the independence of England was realised to be a matter of first consequence, a primary condition to the security of investments.

But it was at this moment, more clearly than ever, that England realised the wisdom of her free-trade policy and reaped its benefits. Into her ports corn, meal, farm produce, and all the necessities of life were poured. Germany and France paid heavily for their taxed goods; and, even then, being in a state of blockade, got little by them. The previous year had been a very prosperous one, and, denied her markets on the Continent, American produce fell in price, and was bought at low terms by Great Britain.

Whilst England was getting her supplies with regularity and cheapness, France and Germany got theirs with difficulty and at a preposterous charge. Already those countries felt the pinch of need which the sudden stoppage of their import trade created.

They had not prepared for such an unexpected turn of events. Confident in their success they had sought no unusual loan and made no preparation to receive an unimpeded flow of food. But now, their navies beaten, their coasts blockaded, their merchantmen caught in a snare, America unable to reach them, or reaching them with scant supplies at a high rate, they reeled beneath a blow that already was telling hard upon them.

To protect her commerce the United States was determined. And if the best and safest market was England there was need of a strong fleet in the Atlantic to maintain the security of her merchantmen which plied across laden with the stores of a rich and bounteous harvest.

Admiral Manan was selected to command the American fleet. A skilled strategist, a brave officer, a man of resource, he was an ideal choice for a mission so delicate.

There was in him also the yearning for active service which is inevitable in a true sailor, and he accepted his office with eagerness. But the President of the United States, in the course of an interview with him, damped his ardour, as the chief citizen had given some thought to the effect of his message.

"We are strictly neutral, Admiral Manan," he said. "Your duty is a difficult one; it is open to temptations. America has need of a man of cool judgment and strict restraint."

"It may be that there will also be need of a little gunpowder," replied the Admiral. "I shall be bound to reply to any hostile overture."

The President smiled.

"Let me clearly understand," said the Admiral, "am I right in reading your message that I must avoid any complications with Great Britain?"

The President paused for a moment before he answered: "It is your duty to protect the commerce of the United States. You must act as your judgment directs in the performance of your mission."

Admiral Manan retired with a very clear view of the Presidential sympathies. And they in no way agreed with his own.

CHAPTER XIV.

RUSSIA TO THE RESCUE.

ON the day following a great battle near Yvetot, when a French army corps, under General Mercier, had been driven back towards Rouen with much loss in men and guns, volatile Paris strove hard to maintain her new reputation for steadfast purpose, and made pretence to smile at this fresh misfortune.

But in the theatres the comedy seemed to have lost its abandonment and the tragic stage was neglected. There was a tremor in the mirth of this gay people. Already the dread thought—as yet unspoken—came to their minds and leaped frantically in their hearts that the sound of cannon was once more almost at their gates, and that the City of Pleasure—that gay and lovely haunt of all the nations—was threatened.

There had been hurried meetings at the Élysée, and pale crowds of stricken citizens waited from hour to hour at its doors to glean intelligence of what new and final effort the Government would make to rid French soil of the invaders.

Now the menace sounded loudly in their ears, there was no longer idle exultation or the wild caprice of sterile enthusiasm. The heart of the brave nation was stirred and there burned the fire of martial ardour, the patriot eagerness for action. This all-pervading flame consumed in a moment the frail superficial egotism that disguised the real courage of the French people.

And what were those wild rumours that flew through the city and brought crowds to the Champs Élysées—crowds at

once indignant and desperate? What meant those frequent hurrying of messengers between the President's house and the German Embassy? Was it true, this strange story, that there had flashed along the railway wires the imperative order that traffic should stand aside and the lines be cleared for an express train that was to hurry over Europe, bound—who knew where?

Loud clamouring thundered the impatience of the people. News—news—any news was better than none at all.

“Are we to do nothing?” shouted one. “Are we to sit here and welcome the English pig to our city?”

“An ill thing it will be,” muttered another, “if we are kept in the dark.”

“Cheer up, neighbour,” exclaimed a horsedealer who stood by. “Our generals have genius and——”

“A genius for getting shot, that 's about all,” was the retort. “I hope you have a good stock in your stables, Mercier. We shall need horse *ragoût* before long, I'm thinking, if there are many more delays.”

And thus the crowd continued, in muffled remonstrance or more strident anger, to call upon their Ministers of State to be up and doing.

It was imperative that the restlessness of the city should be alleviated, and by nightfall an official notice in *Le Journal* gave the welcome intelligence that a decisive step had been taken by the Governments of France and Germany.

“It has been arranged,” ran this announcement, “that the old and tried ally of France, the great nation of Russia, shall be asked to take her proper part in the humiliation of the insolent foe. The three great empires of Europe are together in this supreme struggle, and before the armies of Russia, Germany, and France the haughty domain of England will fall shattered at the first blow.”

There was much rejoicing in Paris.

What could be more magnificent than this, which would practically unite all Europe against Great Britain? And

Russia! The friend and ally of France, the nation which had done her the honour to borrow her money and accept her hospitality; was not Russia, with her foot upon India, with her armies uncountable, and her fleets, which might sweep unquestioned through the Baltic and break into the charmed waters of the North Sea, a power irresistible and invincible?

As the train steamed out of the railway station, bearing the emissaries of France and Germany, the popular excitement and enthusiasm were extraordinary. M. Hanotaux was bodily lifted from his carriage and carried into the saloon that lay waiting for him and his brother diplomats. The air rang with the shouts and plaudits of an intoxicated people.

But the journey to Russia was not one of unmixed pleasure. M. Hanotaux and M. de Visne, who represented the Republic, and Count Caprivi and General Dumpf, who acted on behalf of Germany, were ill at ease.

Their first bold strokes at England had failed disastrously. Two armies and two fleets had been destroyed. But, worse than this in the eye of honour, the English soldier had set his foot upon both dominions. Paris itself was threatened, Stralsund had been seized. Nearly half a million men—bold, confident, desperate—with no one knew how many more preparing to follow them, menaced the existence of the two empires.

“I am not sure that we are right,” said Caprivi gloomily, “in calling in Russia. She is acting now as ever the part of the fox. We do the fighting, but it is she who will carry off the booty.”

“Nothing easier than to retract,” replied Hanotaux with a sneer. “You have an army of four millions, I believe. It is twenty to one.”

Caprivi ground his teeth.

“There’s no need of cheap satire,” he declared. “You know as well as I do that the German reserves are strong

enough to conquer the world. France and Germany together have an army of over seven millions of men. What foe can possibly be an object of dread ? ”

“ Well ? ”

“ You know perfectly well the danger. Germany is united, of course, but——”

“ But,” Hanotaux took up the sentence, “ you are not a free people. There is no need for concealment,” he continued, seeing Caprivi eager to retort. “ Let us face the facts steadily. Your Emperor has been engaged in killing individual freedom. He has established a tyranny worse than that of the Tsar of Russia. If you had to call upon your shopkeepers and citizens you would stand in hourly danger of a socialist rising that would depose your Emperor and destroy your capital. You dare not, in a war unprovoked as this, call on your reserves.”

“ And you ? ” hotly interposed General Dumpf.

“ We are, I admit, in much the same predicament. We have, gentlemen, been labouring under a terrible mistake. Let us admit it frankly. Our huge armies and magnificent reserves, forced into service, are not available, as the mere statist would tell us, for purposes of war. Let the French Government call upon the French people—after a blunder so ghastly as to make the step necessary—and there will be a third revolution. No Cabinet could stand the shock. As for Germany, a collection of states with their jealousies and vanities and selfish interests, you cannot expect that your conscripts will rush to arms when you have trodden upon them, denied them free speech and free religion and public rights. It is in a moment of national agony like this that national defects are most apparent.”

Caprivi was silent for a moment or two and then remarked with emphasis:

“ You are right in the main. We should have crushed England at once. We forgot that every Englishman is a soldier by instinct and by inheritance. Give Britain a mo-

ment to breathe in and the earth swarms with her armies, the seas teem with her fleets."

"Still, there is a limit," interposed Dumpf sagaciously.

"A limit!" laughed Hanotaux. "Annihilate one army and there are two in its place."

"True!" quietly put in Caprivi. "You will remember that it was the raw levies of Surrey that won the day at Waterloo!"

The two Frenchmen turned pale with anger at the remark, and the German General interposed quickly:

"Let there be no quarrelling," he said. "We are friends and allies now, and the task before us is not an easy one. We must, for our own credit, do everything to prevent the necessity of calling out the reserves. That would be an ignominy not to be endured. Russia has given her word; she will now give her armies. It may cost us something; but there is no looking back. England must be crushed now, or for ever dominate the earth."

The four Ambassadors were treated with grave ceremony at St. Petersburg. The phlegmatic Russians, never eager to welcome a defeated ally, regarded them with a coldness which the French statesmen observed with much misgiving. There were no rapturous crowds to acclaim them, only a few casual bystanders gathered on the corners of the streets to gaze curiously into the carriage. The Russian capital was indifference itself.

The audience given at the Royal Palace was one of the strangest in history. Three of the most powerful nations in the world were meeting in conference, and their one object was the destruction of the great people who had taught each the art of government.

They met in the Tsar's private study. It was an impressive spectacle.

The young Tsar, filled with a sense of the divine right of monarchy, possessed of the madness of autocracy, which blindly believed in the inspiration of its mission, received

the French and German legatees with a chill, imperial dignity.

On his right sat General Gourko, the only statesman admitted into the imperial confidence. The Tsar's impetuous, often arrogant temper was balanced by the shrewd, calculating genius of a diplomat who had no illusions, and weighed his men as the analyst weighs the ingredients of a poison.

With infinite skill and sagacity M. Hanotaux unfolded the designs of the united powers and sought to show the necessity for Russia's intervention.

"We have the enemy in our grasp," he argued. "There are two British armies landed upon the Continent. One of them is hemmed in a few hundred miles from Paris. The other is hopelessly inclosed in the defences of Stralsund. We are millions to their thousands. Our victory is a matter of days. But——"

"But you come to St. Petersburg!" drily interposed Gourko.

"We come, it is true, but why? Your Majesty, the position is simple. We can defeat the enemy. But that is not enough. If England is to be crushed, she must be crushed at once, and not only on our shores, but on her own. Every day makes shorter the distance that separates her from her colonies. These Saxons have the brute instinct of the family. Give them a month and we shall have the Canadian, the African, the Australian, and the Indian fighting side by side in Europe. If it were only needed to beat England, it is done. What can half a million avail against seven millions? But much more is needed. England must be overwhelmed, invaded, blotted out, and that at once. We must be in London in a fortnight. Otherwise we shall not be fighting a country but a whole hemisphere!"

The Tsar turned full on the speaker.

"Are your millions not enough for this?" he asked.

"Your Majesty," answered Count Caprivi, "it is, you are aware, dangerous at all times to call up the whole fighting

strength of a nation ; but under such conditions, after—well, let me frankly say it, after failure which should have been success, it might be disastrous. A nation roused to action is a terrible force that may strike we know not where ! ”

“ Your meaning is clear,” said the Tsar, with a certain proud scorn. “ Your democracy, it appears, knows how to dance and play, but it clearly is still a child. You, M. Hantaux, are afraid of this great infant you have called to life. He plays in his nursery now with rattles and ninepins; but at times it is crowns and portfolios and even heads that he plays with. And you, Count, are afraid to arm your loyal burghers for fear that gunpowder will teach them the secret of freedom.”

“ No, sire,” replied Caprivi, with dignity. “ We are prepared to do our part as Heaven may will. But is it fair that the burden should fall upon two nations which have no less to gain than you ? Russia will not decline the responsibility which her profit demands from her.”

“ What ? ” exclaimed the Tsar, suddenly rising, and hot with passion. “ Do you deem that Russia stands in aid of Europe to secure whatever her heart is set on ? What are France and Germany to the splendid empire which is mine, an empire unmeasurable and irresistible, filling the two continents with its acres, sending forth its tendrils to every country, and slowly and silently absorbing the earth ? France plays with her toy constitutions, sets up her sham ministries day after day, calls herself republic or monarchy as the whim seizes her, aye, and sends ridiculous trinkets to Sandy Hook, monuments of Europe’s folly to America’s madness. And Germany ? She whines and pules for land like a fretful invalid, with a ruler who pipes and paints and chatters and stalks, as if kingship were a huckstering, a mere jack-of-all-trades. Russia is the sole, the great representative of the one lasting idea that the world can never forget—the idea of imperial sway, of autocracy, of divine rulership. She stands aside and apart from all the nations. She needs them not.

Some day they shall become part of her. The hour of the Slav is upon you; you feel it even now and stand abashed. Talk not to me of Russia's fear of Britain or of the world itself."

Gourko who had listened gravely and with respect, here quickly interposed.

"Russia has no need of alliances," he said. "But if you ask for help, she is not therefore deaf."

"General," exclaimed De Visne, "you will remember that you are committed. Your hand is set to the league of Europe."

"In part," replied the General. "We are inactive. If we interpose and rescue you from your unfortunate position what compensation do you propose?"

"Compensation!" cried Caprivi. "You have already India!"

"We have India as fee for inactivity."

"But it is the biggest prize of all!"

"And well earned, surely. Had we moved there might have been no need of a storming of Stralsund. If we are to send our armies and our ships we shall need some other price."

"And that is——"

"Gentlemen," said Gourko impressively, "we claim Turkey and Asia Minor."

The four delegates looked at one another in hopeless astonishment. Russia, grasping in all she did, had outwitted them. Already the brunt of the war and all its horrors had fallen upon France and Germany. And now Russia demanded the two most coveted territories that earth still held out to tempt a nation's vanity.

There was a hurried consultation. The Tsar and Gourko sat apart, cold, impassive, inflexible. The game was theirs. They knew too well the pitiful dilemma of the suppliants to their favour. When M. Hanotaux sullenly announced acquiescence in the monstrous terms proposed, barely a smile broke the rigid calmness of Gourko's impenetrable face.

"And what would you have us do?" he asked.

Count Caprivi urged the necessity of breaking up the English navy.

"Destroy the fleet at Stralsund," he said, "and we shall have crippled her strongest arm and caught the English army in a snare. Both Stralsund and Havre demand relief. Break through the blockade, sink the enemies' ships, and we are free to decimate the land forces and make unopposed for British territory."

M. Hanotaux agreed with this advice.

Gourko whispered in his Sovereign's ear. The Tsar nodded assent and the General observed:

"That may be well as a matter for your own relief. But we have a larger duty before us. We must cripple England. What avail the fleets of Stralsund and Havre? They are impotent to do further harm. You can cut to pieces without difficulty the rash adventurous men who have landed on your shores."

"Pardon me," interposed Hanotaux, "the destruction of the English navy is the first consideration. Leave *that* alone and no matter what is done we have not yet begun."

"His Majesty thinks otherwise," coldly replied Gourko. "He is of opinion that our best course is to invade England now that she is unguarded and destitute of her men. Let us seize the island and the fleet can be decimated by degrees. You will never advance a step in the war till you have set foot upon British soil."

The envoys were not of his opinion; but after some deliberation the crafty Gourko had wrung from the man admission that his plan was the wiser.

For an hour the General and the envoys deliberated over the details of this new and terrible movement in the war, and then, with gracious condescension, the Tsar dismissed his visitors.

When they had left the apartment, General Gourko smiled grimly.

“ And these are their statesmen ! ” he exclaimed.

“ General,” was the Tsar’s reply, “ Heaven fights for Holy Russia. Her future expands resistless. This war is but as an instrument for her omnipotence.”

“ The way is clear,” said Gourko. “ With your permission, sire, I will see that a message of sympathy is telegraphed to London. It is essential that there should be no suspicion of the part we shall so soon be playing.”

The Tsar turned upon his general a scornful glance.

“ General Gourko,” he said imperiously, “ we are not hucksters. Russia has no need of lies. It is humiliating enough if she needs to keep back the truth; to speak the lie is unworthy of her ruler and of one whom her ruler trusts.”

Gourko smiled at this rebuke, retired, and sent the telegram.

The envoys drove back to their hotel half mollified, half jubilant. Caprivi more than his companions was moody and silent.

As the carriage was turning into the courtyard, an oath suddenly escaped him, and the others, looking upon him, saw his face dark with rage.

“ Dupes ! ” he cried. “ Dupes ! Fools that we are. I see it plainly enough ! ”

“ What do you mean ? ” cried Hanotaux.

“ What do I mean ? Do you not see ? We asked the Tsar to destroy the English fleet. Any fool can see it is our one hope of safety. And instead he insists upon slipping by and landing on English soil.”

“ Well ? ”

“ Is it so inscrutable, this perfidious purpose ? They can do nothing if they land: England’s citizens are still there. Can a few ships hope to master an imperial island ? No: they know full well that the move is only a blind.”

“ For what ? ” demanded De Visne.

“ Gourko wants to alarm England by threatening her shores. He hopes thereby to force her to send for her

Indian army. That arm of hers, the strongest military arm in the world, once on the high seas, and Russia can march across the boundary and take possession of India ! ”

“ And we——? ”

“ Bah ! We, indeed ! Russia does not care a rap for us. She leaves us to invasion, to sieges, to blockade, to all the burden of the war. She is simply looking out for herself. She will seize her own booty and leave us to pay the bill ! ”

CHAPTER XV.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR.

SIR EVELYN WOOD had successfully accomplished the difficult task committed to him.

A powerful English army had landed at Stralsund, and now occupied one of the strongest positions upon the seacoast of Germany.

It was true the English General had only 200,000 men, against whom were ranged the entire military forces of Germany. Although for the present the huge army of the "Fatherland" was variously engaged, part of it being occupied in Northern France and part still waiting with impatience upon the shores of the Mediterranean at Marseilles till their imprisoned transports might be able to get past the steel fence at Gibraltar and carry them to the agreeable task of dealing a blow at Great Britain herself, there was yet available for immediate purposes a large and well-trained force, which, in point of numbers, seemed likely to overwhelm the brave captors of Stralsund.

Before twelve hours had elapsed nearly 400,000 men, gathered from the capital, from Dantzic, from the Kiel Canal, and from the various military depots of the North, had made their way by rail to Grimmen, a town not twenty-five miles distant from Stralsund, and there prepared to crush the adventurous foe either by a decisive onslaught or by the painful agony of a determined siege.

One enormous advantage Sir Evelyn Wood possessed. The position he occupied was such as a general might have prayed for.

Behind him lay the marsh-bound city with its invulnerable sea-walls. In the land-locked channel beyond lay the splendid fleet, that had so superbly silenced the guns of Rugen.

Three lines of railway ran out from his base. That to his right ran beneath the Schleswig-Holstein peninsula towards Lübeck and Hamburg; that to his left to Stettin; whilst due south a third made direct to the German capital.

Stationed at the convergence of these three railways, it was clear that the General could throw out his army in large and distinct masses for a considerable distance, and yet keep in rapid communication with every section.

Whilst Sir Evelyn was inspecting the outlying district in the direct front, having for its centre the line to Berlin, he pointed out to those members of his staff nearest to him the natural advantages of his position.

"Whatever the odds against us," he observed, "we should be invulnerable."

"So long as we stay here, sir," assented one of his officers.

"Do not look forward to an excursion into Germany yet awhile," responded the General with a grim smile. "Our duty is clear. We must cling to Stralsund with desperation. With 200,000 men not even Napoleon, with Wellington as chief of the staff, could march into a hostile country teeming with gigantic armies. No; we cannot afford to indulge in the mere vainglory of fanatical heroism. Our men have need of self-restraint as well as courage here."

"Then you intend to keep at Stralsund?"

"Yes. In two days or less we shall be surrounded by an immense army, through which it will be impossible to cut our way. But luckily we have a strong position. I will establish my lines on those low hills, which are, I should calculate, about four miles away. With this spacious plain as my base, with three lines of railways, with a strong fortress at my back, it will not be difficult to remain here as long as our stores last."

“ And thus keep the Germans engaged ? ”

“ Exactly,” responded the General. “ It is our part to keep stoutly to Stralsund and keep at us one or more of the German army corps. We shall thus prevent a massing of the two nations in France, and Lord Roberts’s task will be so much the lighter. Don’t be afraid that there will be no fighting. We shall have to be troublesome, but we must not hazard a fixed engagement. We must wait in patience till we can go forward.”

The officer looked at his general in surprise.

“ Wait ? ” he asked. “ For what ? ”

“ Wait,” was the laconic reply, “ till Canada and South Africa and Australia come swimming down the Baltic.”

And with these words he turned his horse’s head and rode back to his quarters.

Within a very few hours the first rough intrenchment of the English army was perfected. Soldier and sailor, working side by side, with cheerful song and unfailing jest, accomplished miracles. Stralsund was once more herself and her guns gleamed more cruelly than ever over the blue water.

Four miles distant from the outskirts of the town ran a low ridge of hills. Through deep cuttings the three railways burrowed their way east, south, and west, opening a passage to all Germany. Where these cuttings lay, Sir Evelyn Wood took up his main positions, throwing up earthworks which hourly became more formidable, and whence the British guns swept for miles the whole of the shelterless plain that spread to the south. In the delta formed by this line of forts and the town of Stralsund the army lay encamped, sheltered by the sloping hills no less than by the guns.

Of ammunition and supplies there was abundance. Hour after hour the ships gave up their wealth of stores, and it was quite clear that Sir Evelyn would be able, with ease, to maintain himself and his army in position for at least a month or six weeks.

It was not long before the strength of his defence was afforded an opportunity for proof.

On the day after the landing of the British the German army corps, assembled at Grimmen, was already overwhelming in its strength, and a determined effort was made by the Germans to drive home a reconnaissance in force.

At first the General in command thought to pierce through the British lines by the mere vehemence of his assault. A desperate attack was made upon their position, but the plan was folly itself. The English guns swept down the advancing foe with fearful precision, and the plain lay littered with the dead before the assailants could deal a single effective blow.

Twice was this wild course followed, with only repeated havoc and butchery. It became clear to the German General that it was a case of investment and not of isolated attack.

He next sought to tempt the English to a sortie, and, on one occasion, after a bitter and apparently well-meant assault along the whole line of front open to him, he withdrew his right wing so rapidly as to give the idea of a precipitate flight.

Sir Evelyn Wood smiled.

"We will give them all they will care for in the way of attack," he observed, "but we will choose our own time and method."

Thus for three days the British lay at Stralsund, secure yet unable to move, whilst intermittent fighting and occasional assault filled up the burden of the hours.

It was then that the German Emperor realised that he himself was needed. The sacred Fatherland was soiled by the print of a hostile foot, and yet no visible earthquake had occurred. Only the print became larger and larger, and its toe threatened to stretch to his own palace under the Lindens.

He had good cause to be mortified. No sooner had the false intelligence of the landing of the invaders on the English coast reached him than with impetuous enthusiasm he sent the following telegram:

To General Von Bremen, Worthing.—Your success is only what your Emperor expected. You shall name your reward when you enter London.

Next day the telegram was returned to him, as the continental cables had not been destroyed. The postmaster at Worthing was not without his sense of humour. His endorsement was :

Returned, address not known, neither of him nor any other German general. Try English Channel.

This was not pleasant, but the German Emperor was not to be easily dispirited. He felt that the hour had come when he should prove himself the saviour of his country, and he laid aside with reluctance the composition of an epic and the music of a comic opera on which he was engaged.

He was closeted with Herr Pimpelnick, a poet of some renown, when the news of the capture of Stralsund arrived.

The poet handed him a few verses, which the Emperor had given him to correct. They flamed with patriotism.

William looked at the paper with some perplexity.

“ It does not seem quite the same,” he declared.

“ Your Majesty,” replied Pimpelnick, “ I have merely ventured to alter one or two expressions.”

“ But the rhymes ? ”

“ Yes, sire; I made a few changes in the metre, and gave just a touch or two to the scansion. One or two lines you will see I have left out, and I have added——”

“ Impertinent ! ” exclaimed the Emperor. “ Have you dared to tamper with your sovereign’s poetry ? ”

“ Pardon, sire,” stammered the trembling Pimpelnick ; “ but by the laws of prosody——”

“ Laws of prosody ! ” fiercely interrupted the Emperor. “ Do you think that the Emperor William is bound by laws as other men ? I make laws, not follow them.”

He might have done many unpleasant things to the poor

poet had not his Chamberlain created a diversion by bringing the disastrous news of Stralsund.

William was courageous enough, but his sense of proportion was distinctly weak.

His first act was to order 4,500,000 copies of his last patriotic song to be printed and distributed to his soldiers. He also ordered that it should be sung with regularity each day. And sung it might have been, only that no tune could be found or devised to fit the eccentric vagaries of the words.

Next he issued a proclamation to his people in magniloquent language, in which the whole pomp and sublimity of the Teutonic tongue displayed itself.

"My people," it began, "your Emperor at last calls upon your patriotism. Your devotion to him and your respect for the God of your religion alike bid you go forth to battle for your native land. It will be some consolation to you to feel that you are not only fighting for your country, for your household hearths, for your children, and for yourselves, but that you are also fighting for your Emperor. He will be watchful and untiring, and his presence shall cheer and his wisdom direct his subjects in their holy quarrel.

"England has dared to invade our Fatherland. She alone is responsible for the terrible crime of a murderous war.

"She has incited the nations to revolt by her selfishness and the cold heartlessness of her pusillanimous prosperity. Every colony she has planted in the savage world has been a blow at peace.

"And now she throws off the mask. She resents the punishment the nations would inflict upon her for her insolence, and dares to set foot upon our beloved soil.

"But she has reckoned without the German Emperor and the German people. Let us go forth to eject the impious foe.

"Your Emperor's voice calls upon you. The supreme hour of Germany's great destiny has come."

This proclamation was read with much interest by the good people of Germany.

The general feeling was to laugh at the English army corps which had managed to slip into Stralsund. It was caught neatly in a trap. But a few days were needed, and the foe could be outnumbered ten to one.

And yet there was not lacking an undercurrent of revolt. The liberal spirit, so often crushed and maimed by the new Imperialism, looked with fear and loathing on this unholy conspiracy against the one nation which stood before the world as a champion of freedom. There came, too, the conviction that another triumph of militarism would be the last fatal blow to the hopes of German liberty. Let the united powers trample upon Great Britain and Imperialism would become a despotism, unveiled and unassailable.

Beneath the loyal shout that rang through the columns of a handcuffed Press, there was, therefore, an ominous muttering.

For four days the English guns had snarled down from the slopes around Stralsund on the German army, and twice had a definite onset of the enemy been turned to rout and confusion, when the Emperor reached the seat of war.

He immediately sent for General von Bremen, who was in command—a Von Bremen of a somewhat more chastened spirit and a milder demeanour since his return in a battered ship from the fight at Worthing—and informed him that the direction of affairs would in future be his—William's.

"I will inspect the position at once," he said. "On my return I will meet the general officers. See that they are assembled in two hours' time."

"At headquarters, sire?" asked the General.

"No. I observed a school-house on my way here. Let them assemble there."

So saying he rode off.

The prospect was not encouraging. The English lines lay around Stralsund in the form of a huge semicircle. On

either side the morass pushed out its deadly slime. A chain of batteries which swept the whole field of action presented an insuperable barrier.

The German army was arranged in three divisions. Each was over 100,000 strong, and was possessed of ample artillery. But the position they occupied was most unfortunate. The low ground that spread its monotonous plain towards New Brandenburg afforded no point of vantage for a blockade. William saw that following the tactics of a siege they might remain there for ever, so long as the English fleet held the Baltic and threw supplies into the town of Stralsund.

He rode thoughtfully back, without a word to his escort, and reached the school-room, dismounted and entered.

There was something ludicrous in the spectacle that greeted his eye—had he but realised it. On forms and benches where little *Deutscher* boys were wont to grapple with the intricacies of the German language, sat old and grizzled veterans, officers who had spent a stormy apprenticeship in the great war of 1871, generals of experience and long-proved skill.

But the Emperor was not a man of humour. He did not even blush when he stood in front of the little group and said abruptly:

“Generals, I have had you assembled here that you might learn my conclusions upon the problem that is set before you. I propose to give you a brief lecture upon the science of attack. I shall be glad if you will make notes of the more important points I shall raise.”

So saying, he picked up a piece of chalk and began to draw—somewhat rudely—upon the blackboard a representation of the disposition of the forces.

The generals listened respectfully. The Emperor waxed warm. It was a peculiarity of his discourse that “what was true was not new, and what was new was not true.” He elaborated his scheme. His generals, it is true, had learnt it

from the French Campaign, they had learnt it from Napoleon the Great, they had even seen it discussed in books, pamphlets, and in the *Berlin War Gazette*. But they said nothing of this.

They only looked impressed, astonished, convinced.

"Thus you will see, generals," the Emperor was continuing, "that the most certain line of attack is to hurl your strength full upon the enemy's centre. You will lose many men, the loss may be disastrous. But you will find that the tactic is certain of success in the end. Divide the foe into two parts without inter-communication, decimate his centre, and——"

At this moment he was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger, breathless and excited.

The Emperor turned angrily upon him.

"Your Majesty," exclaimed the new-comer, "the enemy have made a sortie. They have advanced upon us and are now full in attack."

"Where are they attacking?" the Emperor eagerly asked.

"They are attacking our centre, sire!" was the response, and the dead silence of the group as it was gazing upon the hieroglyphics on the blackboard changed to sudden excitement.

The lecture was not brought to a close in the school-room. There was, instead, a complete and more convincing demonstration outside !

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR GETS A LESSON.

THE day had dawned cold and grey, and a faint mist, heavy with the fetid air of the surrounding marshes, enveloped the plain of Stralsund.

Both armies lay concealed in its treacherous embrace, and the English outposts, doubly alert, sought anxiously to catch the ominous sounds which might betoken the enemy's advance. But the guns on either side were silent, and there prevailed that horrible stillness which, pregnant with catastrophe and destruction, broods over a brief pause in the stress of battle.

Admiral Dale and Sir Evelyn Wood had spent the forenoon in close discussion of the situation.

"I fear," said the General gravely, "that I ought not to accept your proposal that the fleet should remain in the harbour of Stralsund. It is, of course, for you to decide, but you will doubtless be of much more assistance to the English forces elsewhere."

"Candidly," replied the Admiral, "I do not care to leave you here. Our situation generally is, I know, full of the most terrible difficulties, and we have to violate almost every law of military science. But still, the fleet gone, you are alone, penned in an awkward country by an army that is practically inexhaustible. What can you do? How can you hope to break through? With us behind you there is a certain path of escape; but if we go, you are not only menaced by decimation in front, you have also the danger of a hostile fleet entering the roads and turning its guns upon you."

Sir Evelyn shook his head :

"My own duty, Dale, is, it seems to me, clear. I hope you will see it from the same point of view. There is not, and cannot be, escape for my army."

"No escape?"

"No. We must either hold our ground or be destroyed. It is not a case where we can talk of retreat. If we hold out we gain time. We may do considerable havoc. We at least keep a huge army corps from mischief elsewhere. But how can we retreat? Retreat can only mean that we throw up the game: it means England invaded. Do not forget that we have got to a desperate issue. We cannot indulge now in the luxury of territorial manœuvres. The fate of England must be settled here and now. If we are to be crushed, let it be on German soil. We will at least die fighting. But we must, whatever happens, remain. I shall cling to Stralsund till my last man is shot. There is nothing else to be done."

"If you are determined," replied the Admiral reluctantly, "I will say no more. It is a terrible case where a sailor has to turn calmly out to sea whilst the soldier is fighting for his life. I don't like it, and it goes against the grain."

"Dale," said the General earnestly, "this war will see many changes, and God knows what the end will be. But we will at least not think of ourselves, only of old England. You do not know how she may need you. You cannot tell what new enemies will spring up to attack her. You cannot know what peril she may be in now. Let us part, old fellow. You know I shall do my best here. I'm not going to throw up the game without making the enemy pay more dearly for it than they care. We can only die for the old land, anyhow. And here I shall stay with all the pluck and pride of England to help me. If we win we shall meet again. If not—well, I don't know that you or I or anyone here—no, not the least amongst my men, will care a jot to keep on living. You know what I mean, Dale. It is a true case of death or glory."

The Admiral pressed the General's hand.

"After all, you are right," he said. "I guess there's a task like yours for me somewhere, and I hope so. It will be some consolation to be in the thick of it."

A faint smile passed over the grave face of Sir Evelyn.

"We won't talk too much of dying," he said. "My army here is a pretty tough problem for the enemy after all. Don't be astonished if the day of miracles returns. Two hundred thousand Englishmen! My dear Dale, there's victory in the very phrase!"

And the two men, passing swiftly into matters of detail, concluded their arrangements. Two days later Admiral Dale was to steam out to sea and make for the English Channel. A cruiser alone would remain in the harbour for purposes of communication.

And General Wood, with the sea at his back and countless foes in front, alone in a hostile country, cut off on all sides from deliverance, was to make his stand—a long, stubborn, desperate stand, and defy the united armies of the German Empire.

When the Admiral left him the General gave a few brief orders to his staff, and then entered the train—consisting of the engine and a single carriage—which stood on the Berlin railway, and was kept in readiness night and day for rapid journeys to the advance lines.

There was a curious expression upon his face, one that betokened both anxiety and elation.

The fact was that he had resolved upon an audacious move which the enemy least expected. Sir Evelyn Wood knew his Livy, and had not studied the strategic subtleties of Fabius in vain.

He realised that the strongest defence he could make was one judiciously blended with attack. He could not hope to put to rout the enormous army before him, but he could at least attempt to undermine its moral strength.

To give repeated blows to the enemy, to rush out when

opportunity favoured, and sting them where they showed weakness, and always to retire as soon as he had made them smart, giving them no opportunity for leisured battle, was a policy which he knew would do more to make his position secure than the most desperate resistance upon his own lines. It was his intention to break down the confidence of the foe, to create a sense of uneasiness, and to goad them into rash retaliation. Sir Evelyn Wood was a master of tactics, and knew the galling power of swift, destructive sorties followed by brilliant retreats.

During the morning many picked regiments had been drafted from the three wings of the British army into a magnificent division, which now rested on the seaward slopes of the centre of the line of fortifications. They formed a Reconnaissance Corps which, for experience, pluck, and discipline, could undoubtedly not be equalled outside the English ranks.

Conspicuous amongst these favoured troops were the 2d Life Guards, commanded by the Earl of Dundonald, the 1st Royal Dragoons, under Lieutenant-Colonel Tomkinson, the Seaforth Highlanders, the Royal Irish Regiment, and the 2d Battalion of the Buffs. The Reconnaissance Corps was commanded by that brilliant officer, Lieutenant-General Marshall, who had relinquished his position as Inspector-General of Cavalry for service in the field.

Cavalry and infantry were supported by six batteries of Horse Gunners. Thoroughly equipped in every department, the corps was eminently suited to the dangerous task before it. A smart attack, swift manœuvring, a rapid and effective blow, and a hurried and orderly retreat—this programme was one which troops trained to the last degree of perfection, and to whom concerted action had become an instinct, were likely to carry out with the utmost success.

With hearts beating high, and envied by every other soldier in the army, the Reconnaissance Corps moved down the outer slope through the faint mist and made rapidly over the plain. This human projectile, hurled when least expected,

was falling upon the centre of the German army at the very moment when the young Emperor was lecturing his generals upon the art of attack and upon the specific virtue of the Napoleonic method. In all, there were not less than 3000 sabres and 18,000 infantry, a body large enough for inflicting a severe blow, and yet not too unwieldy for the purposes of rapid movement and a speedy retreat.

Barely had the alarm been raised, and the unsuspecting army apprised of this new danger, than a severe fire from all arms of the British forces poured into the German centre, and with a dash the corps was upon them.

A slight disorder appeared in the enemy's ranks. It had not occurred to the commander to anticipate an attack. He regarded the Englishmen as so much quarry, held fast in a difficult position, waiting—it might be for a day or two—to be quietly annihilated.

Before, therefore, the enemy had time to reply, or to put themselves in a position to receive the onset of the English soldiers, a destructive fire had committed enormous damage, and Teutonic complacency had a first and severe experience of the quality of the Saxon mettle.

In a few moments, however, the Germans had recovered themselves, and prepared to give a terrible response to the attentions of the gallant English corps. A heavy fire was opened from the batteries; but owing to the mist which still prevailed, and to the extended character of the English lines, the damage done was little, and much wild firing resulted in a waste of ammunition rather than in any effective injury.

General Marshall handled his men with consummate skill.

A rapid change of front confused the German gunners, who had to guess as far as possible the position of the attacking forces.

With all the ingenuity of scientific calculation, the British commander directed his fire upon the huge target that lay at his mercy and never halted a moment to await the reply which might be made.

In a brief time the English infantry came into close conflict with the advanced troops of the enemy. There was a shout of triumph as, with merciless aim and unwavering force, the Seaforth threw themselves upon the startled 2d Berlin Regiment, and, after a brief moment of indecision, hurled it back upon the main body.

It was at this instant that the Emperor William arrived at the front, enraged by the suddenness of the blow which had caught him napping, and excited beyond measure by the fierceness of the onslaught.

Brave at heart and with the true instincts of a soldier, he caught at once the nature of the situation, and a fierce anger convulsed him at the spectacle of some of his own picked Berlin troops staggering so quickly beneath the blows of the enemy.

For his troops, drilled with all the art and care of martinet perfection, had for the most part never been in actual warfare. And the sudden dash of the English Reconnaissance Corps, persistent, terrible, and not to be denied, had caused one of those brief panics from which even experienced veterans are not absolutely safe.

Sword in hand and regardless of danger, the Emperor rode amongst his retreating soldiers, and in furious language bade them take their stand again. Then, with a sudden change of purpose, he rushed to a battery stationed hard by which commanded the English advance.

"They are at your mercy!" he shouted to the major in command. "Beat them back! It is a disgrace that a handful of men should withstand the whole German army!"

Glancing around he saw a gun which remained silent. The British fire had decimated this section of the battery, and the quartermaster lay dead upon the truck. Without hesitation or thought, but yielding to a wild impulse, he sprang off his horse, and surrounded by amazed artillery officers who rushed up, trained the twelve-pounder unaided, and with his own hand fired it into the opposing infantry already pressing hard upon the retreating Berliners.

“Your Majesty!” cried a General officer, who dashed up at this extraordinary spectacle. “For Heaven’s sake remount. You are in the most frightful danger. What shall we say if any harm befall you?”

And so saying, he literally forced the excited Emperor to remount his charger, and without a moment’s delay took him off to a safer spot.

It was well he did so. Shamed and encouraged by the brave action of their Emperor, the gunners, although pelted by a fierce fire, stood with desperate courage to their guns, and, as the enemy came more clearly into vision, began to take a surer aim.

In a few minutes a deadly hail of shrapnel opened upon the British infantry. Already was the Berlin Regiment taking heart again, and thus checked in front and commanded by a frightful fire, severe damage was inflicted upon the brave attackers.

Colonel Stewart, of the Seaforth Highlanders turned pale for a second, as he realised that the fury of victory had carried his men into too precipitate an advance, and that the battery opening upon him would possibly render retreat hideously disastrous. The mist, too, was beginning to clear, and he saw that the whole corps, as it fell back, as arranged, upon the British lines, would be followed by a fire which might reduce the force to rags.

His plan of action was speedily formed.

Rising in his stirrups he yelled to the regiment in ringing tones which could be heard loud above the rattle of musketry: “The Mackenzies have got their chance. We must take these guns. Fix bayonets! Charge!”

His final order broke into a veritable shriek. He was answered by a wild Scottish cheer, and, without a moment’s hesitation, the brave Highlanders rushed full pelt upon the German battery.

It was a terrible, if an heroic sight. The dauntless infantry, heedless of the fierce fire, that played on them, closed

up again and again as their ranks became thinned, and dashed imperturbable and resistless up the slight slope towards the deadly guns.

It was one of those rare acts which lift and ennoble war and make it sublime. The Seaforth Highlanders knew well that they were giving their lives for their fellows. If they reached the guns and silenced their fire, it would be probably only by their own self-destruction. And they did not pause to heed this terrible thought, but with devoted heroism bore down upon the foe.

Step by step they pursued their way, falling in dozens as they advanced; but their fierce persistence had its effect. Mere courage could not withstand the grim, awful determination of men who knew they were doomed, and cared not for their safety. Bursting through the wavering ranks of a German infantry regiment which sprang forward to the support of the artillery, the noble remnant of the famous regiment cut their way to the battery, and in a second one of the guns was spiked.

It seemed unlikely that more than this could be effected. Dashing up from all sides, reinforcements from the foe arrived and threatened to surround them, and make of the battery a deadly carnage heap. The Highlanders held their ground nobly, and with superb defiance withstood a wild attack before which almost any regiment might be pardoned for staggering.

But now, in what seemed the last moments of a deed seldom paralleled, there came a new and welcome shout.

“Old England for ever!” was the cry borne upon their ears.

Amid the confusion it was difficult at first to realise what had happened.

Stationed some distance away, and engaged in assisting in the retreat and covering the retiring infantry, the 1st Dragoons had witnessed from afar the heroic effort of the Seaforth Highlanders.

Nor did Colonel Tomkinson wait to consider.

Forming his men he bade them charge. Along the enemy's lines swept this magnificent regiment of cavalry, impetuous and terrible.

Tearing through opposing obstacles, and by sheer weight and valour beating aside the press of opposition, the Dragoons dashed like a whirlwind up the slope and cut into the swaying mass surrounding the gallant Highlanders.

So sudden, so magnificent, so resistless was the charge that the whole enemy yielded, half beaten back, and half magnetised. In a second the remaining guns were rudely harnessed to some of the cavalry horses by the Dragoons. The Seaforth thus cloaked were soon enabled to retire rapidly towards their lines, leaving the foe amazed and wildly wroth, not only at the escape of the quarry, but at the loss of their guns.

From his post away to the right the Emperor William had seen the magnificent charge of the British cavalry, and in pride of soldiership could not refrain from an involuntary cry of angry admiration.

Mistaking his emotion, General Krudsdel, who was at his side observed :

" Ah, those English ! They have the devil's own luck."

His amazement was unbounded when his Emperor, turning fiercely round, said in indignant tones :

" Silence, sir ! What do you mean by your insinuation ? Do you know that those are the 1st Dragoons ? I am their Colonel."

And turning his back upon his astounded General, he rode off.

Within two hours the masterly skill of General Marshall had carried the Reconnaissance Corps to safety. It had effected his mission.

Thousands of Germans lay dead upon the field. But this was not the worst.

For the enemy had commenced to know and to fear the might of the British Tommy. The Emperor's precept had been terribly borne out in practice.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

WHEN Admiral Manan quitted the shores of the United States he was fully convinced that the American nation and their political leaders held widely different views on the struggle in Europe. The sympathies of nearly every class of the community were entirely with the mother country, whilst the Washington bureaucrats thought they were playing at high politics by adopting a cautious and neutral attitude.

The Admiral also knew that as soon as the Sovereign People had made its opinions clearly known the politicians would "climb down."

Individually he was strongly on the side of Great Britain. Not only was her quarrel just—thus claiming his support as an upright and conscientious man of the world—but there was also a personal phase. As a sailor he quivered with the hope that when the United States Navy came into action it might be to aid the flag of Nelson against any assailant, however powerful or ambitious.

Yet he had his definite orders, and these must be obeyed against all quixotic inclinations, even though the performance of his duty should lead to the destruction of the ideals of his whole active life.

As a non-combatant, however, he was in no way prevented from offering his best wishes to Vice-Admiral James E. Erskine, when he encountered the British North American fleet on its way to the English Channel.

The two fleets sighted each other in mid-ocean on the fifth morning after Admiral Manan had left New York, and when

they came more closely together the American commander accepted the British Admiral's invitation to lunch, the two being, of course, already well acquainted.

"Why are you returning to Europe?" inquired Admiral Manan, when they were conversing together, apart from the other officers, on the quarter-deck of the *Crescent*.

"I really don't know," said Erskine. "It seemed to me that our home forces had absolutely crumpled up all the enemy's ships except the cruisers that escaped through Gib. and reached Brest in safety, and these could easily be held tight there by a section of the Channel fleet. Under such conditions it would surely have been better to leave me in Canadian waters. But my instructions were imperative. I was to start forthwith and call at Queenstown for further orders, keeping an eye open on the way for any stray French or German ships which might have designs on our commerce."

"It is curious, certainly."

"Yes," was the thoughtful rejoinder, "so curious that it suggests a tremendous possibility."

"And what is that?" said the American.

"Russia may be about to join the coalition against us."

Admiral Manan uttered a low whistle to give vent to his amazement—a proceeding so unlike the regulation deportment of a British officer of similar rank that a passing marine nearly followed his example.

"Great Scott!" he said at last, "I wish that little business had been fixed up before I left New York."

It was now the turn of the Englishman to be puzzled. "Why?" he inquired.

"Because," came the emphatic reply, "my people are feeling very irritated as it is about France and Germany rounding on you in such an underhanded way, but if they knew that Russia was also taking a hand in the game, I should not be sailing alongside you to-day by accident, but by design."

"Are you quite sure of that?" said the other eagerly, "I must say that I despaired of help from the States when I read the speeches of your prominent men and the articles of your chief newspapers."

"I guess I know the American people pretty well by this time," was Admiral Manan's confident answer, "and you must not forget that the people pay for both the men and the papers. They can have a fresh tune whenever they like."

Under existing circumstances the two officers agreed that it was inadvisable they should long continue in company, and the American commander decided upon a more southerly course, as he was in no very urgent hurry to reach his destination, which, by the way, was the British Channel, where he could coal and be out of the way of the belligerents for the time, whilst within easy call of the American Minister in London.

Before parting the crews of both fleets cheered each other heartily. The American bands played "Rule, Britannia," and the British bands struck up "Hail, Columbia," following on with "Yankee Doodle."

Not to be outdone, and by way of a final message, the flagship of the U. S. fleet sent across the waters the strains of "Auld Lang Syne."

Thus, with mutual good wishes, the fleets of England and the United States slowly diverged in their journey eastwards, and ere the light failed over the sea they were hull down on the horizon from each other.

Vice-Admiral Erskine had a fairly smart lot of ships under his flag. They were not heavy vessels, it is true, and were unable to encounter battle-ships of the latest type, but still, had such put in an appearance, there would, to use the classic expression of a gunner's mate on the *Crescent*, have been "a devil of a row." In addition to four recently built first-class cruisers, the *Sutlej*, *Jumna*, *Narbudda*, and *Jhelum*, there were the usual members of the North-American fleet, namely, the *Buzzard*, *Canada*, *Cleopatra*, *Magicienne*, *Mo-*

hawk, Partridge, Pelican, Tartar and Tourmaline,—fourteen ships, all fast and well-armed with quick-firing guns.

On the morning after they had said good-bye to Admiral Manan, the British fleet discerned the smoke of a distant assemblage of ships slightly northward of their course, and Admiral Erskine at once took measures to be prepared for all eventualities.

It was well that he did so.

Within half-an-hour's time he had counted eighteen French and German cruisers. Evidently these were the vessels that had slipped through Gibraltar and remained so long inactive in the harbour at Brest. Their mission now was to cut off all communication between Canada and England, and they regarded themselves as fully equal to the task of capturing the British North-American fleet when they encountered it.

Nevertheless, Vice-Admiral von Grödenau did n't expect to meet his opponent in mid-Atlantic.

In fact, he had been caught napping in every sense of the word, and Admiral Erskine was quick to realise that he was probably far more prepared for an immediate engagement than was the enemy. Anyhow, he resolved to act upon that assumption, and whilst the French and German ships commenced to take distance for effective manœuvring the British Admiral flew this signal : " Pick out your opponent and go straight for him."

The battle commenced at 8.10 a.m., by the *Crescent* firing at the German flagship *Augusta*, and within one hour and fifteen minutes four British ships and nine of the allied fleet had sunk, whilst the remainder of the enemy had struck their colours.

A Cunard steamship, the *Lucania*, had come up just as the opposing fleets were closing together, and one of her passengers thus described the fight in a letter to a friend :

" Excitement on board was almost at the point of madness as we saw the two masses of ships quietly nearing each other, without the slightest sound being audible over the interven-

ing stretch of water. It was a positive relief to the nerves when the British flagship sent a shell whizzing at the enemy, who promptly replied.

“ From that moment we certainly could not complain of want of noise. Not only was there the banging and clashing of the big guns and the rattle of small arms, but the constant clang of the projectiles against the armoured portions of the ships reminded one for all the world of the hammering and clattering in a ship-building yard.

“ This, however, was not ship-making but ship-breaking. In a little while we saw a vessel pitch on to her nose and go straight down. We believed her colours were French, but could not be sure.

“ Someone appealed to the captain, a Scotchman, and asked him which side was winning. The Captain glared awfully at him and said : ‘ Are ye daft, man, tae ask sic a drivelling idiot’s question ? ’ Of course the captain, like the rest of us, hoped there would be only one end to it.

“ At last it was all over. The noise ceased, the smoke rolled away from the face of the water, and we could see the Union Jack floating proudly, whilst not another flag was in sight.

“ Then they cheered like mad, and the women began to cry for sheer relief. Captain Macpherson nearly burst the fog-horn and steam-whistle before he gave the order to resume our course to New York.”

The victory, though complete, had been dearly purchased. Several of the British ships were as badly damaged as those of the enemy which still floated, and nearly all were rendered so unseaworthy that a moderate gale would have endangered their existence.

Admiral Erskine found that over thirty per cent. of his men were killed or wounded, whilst on board the French and German ships the carnage had been terrible, and he had to send one-half of his available medical staff to their assistance.

Three at least of the enemy were quite disabled, and the *Crescent*, *Narbudda*, and *Magicienne* had to take them in tow.

By nightfall, the weather fortunately remaining calm, the British commander had succeeded in securing something like order in the disposition of his crippled fleet, which now commenced to move quietly eastwards, with the prospect of reaching Queenstown in about four days' time.

The night was clear, and the lights of the great company of vessels could consequently be distinguished at a considerable distance.

When, therefore, Commander James E. Tully, of the fast dispatch vessel *Seahorse*, sighted them, he knew that he must risk signalling an enemy and trust to his heels afterwards to escape if the fleet should turn out to be hostile.

He sent up four white rockets followed by a red one and waited anxiously for the reply, with his hand on the engine-room indicator. It came, four red rockets and one white, and he knew, to his exceeding joy, that he had fallen in with Erskine's force.

As speedily as possible he was conveyed to the flagship. He handed an Admiralty dispatch to his superior officer and then, with the quick, comprehensive glance of a sailor, took in the details of the day's proceedings.

Admiral Erskine paled as he read the instructions he had just received.

"Great Heavens!" he cried, "my victory has been as disastrous as a defeat. I suppose you guess the contents of this dispatch, Commander Tully?"

"I am afraid I do, sir," was the answer. "When I left Portsmouth the newspapers stated that although Russia had not definitely declared war the Government feared treachery on her part. A strong Russian fleet had slipped through the Baltic and was last sighted, the day before yesterday, off the north-west of Scotland. The *Surprise* is also looking for you on the southern route, and I might have missed you if I had not fallen in with the American——"

"Ha," interrupted the Admiral. "Did you tell Manan your news?"

"It was the first question he asked me after giving me the fullest information with regard to your possible location. He at once inquired if Russia had declared war."

"And what did you say?"

"I thought I was justified, sir, in giving him such news as I possessed."

"Perfectly justified. What did he do then?"

"He informed me of the chance of your meeting the allied fleets, which I see you have done, sir, with splendid effect, and at once, judging by his smokestacks, he started for England full speed ahead."

The Admiral gazed hopelessly at the papers in his hands before he said, in a broken voice, "My orders are to proceed with all possible haste to the Bristol Channel to intercept a possible Russian attack upon our coal supply, and here I am, in mid-Atlantic, with a practically disabled fleet, hardly making five knots an hour and utterly unfitted to fight half a dozen well-handled colliers. Oh, it is cruel, cruel!"

But Erskine was not the man to flinch before difficulties, however insurmountable they might appear.

"Commander Tully," he said with his wonted calm tones of subdued energy, "you must return at once to Valentia and telegraph the facts of the case thence to London. Say that five of my ships can make ten knots, and at that rate we will reach the Bristol Channel. The others are useless save to act as a broken-down convoy to the nine ships I have captured. The other nine French and German cruisers are at the bottom of the Atlantic. If Providence so decrees, the rest of the fleet will in due course reach Queenstown. As a final word—every minute lost in conveying this news to the Admiralty, renders the case of England more desperate."

Commander Tully saluted, swung himself over the side of the *Crescent* without waiting for the formality of a ladder, and said as he reached his boat: "Bend to it, my lads.

'Sharp' 's the word with the davits, as the ship starts the moment I reach deck.'

During four weary days did Admiral Erskine pace the deck of the *Crescent*, whilst his now tiny force crept along at what appeared to be a snail's pace over the vast expanse of the Atlantic.

More than ten knots he did not dare to ask his engineers, and it was only by almost superhuman efforts on the part of those devoted officers that even this moderate rate of speed was attained without the ever-threatened break-down.

During this miserable period of inaction not a vessel was seen save one or two belated cargo-boats travelling eastwards, and from the absence of all outward-bound traffic, the British commander argued the fulfilment of his worst fears, namely, an expected or actual attack upon England by the Russians.

It was an ill task asking the Admiral any questions at this time, yet he achieved wonders in the way of repairs to his damaged ships as they progressed, and by the time they sighted Lundy Island they presented a highly creditable appearance. No one would ever judge by their superficial semblance that they had recently passed the ordeal of a terrific naval engagement.

It was midday on Thursday, May 25th, that the British fleet passed north of Lundy, and it was with a wildly beating heart that Erskine slowly deciphered the message signalled by the lighthouse keeper, who was telephonically connected with the mainland.

And this is what the fluttering little flags tediously spelled out :

"American fleet anchored off Cardiff last night. At day-break strong Russian fleet passed up Channel to attack Cardiff. Negotiations took place between American and Russian Admirals, and it is believed that American Admiral insists upon delay in Russian attack. Reason not known. Channel fleet now off Land's End on way from Havre."

Erskine smiled for the first time for four days. In fact, his accustomed good humour returned with avidity to make up for his previous anxiety.

"Manan is a brick!" he exclaimed. "I might have known he would have worked off some dodge upon them. Played them up strong, I expect, upon the protection of commerce idea." And he stamped about the quarter-deck with such joyful eagerness the men knew all was right so far, and the wounded turned more comfortably in their berths as the good news permeated through the ship.

Three hours later the five ships were abreast of the Nash Lights. When the broad reach of the Channel between the Steep Holm Island and Barry began to open up, the British fleet suddenly saw three battle-ships and four cruisers, flying the Russian colours, coming down Channel, and Erskine at once threw his vessels in line across their path.

Preparations were speedily made for a fight, but when the Russians were some two miles distant they were seen, to the amazement of the British, in view of the disparity of the forces, to stop dead and strike their colours.

This token of unconditional surrender was immediately followed by a signal from the leading battle-ship: "To avoid useless bloodshed I yield.—Michaelovitch, Grand Duke and Commander-in-Chief."

Such an astounding piece of good luck could hardly be credited by the British Admiral, but by this time his officers were beginning to note through their glasses that the Russians showed many signs of recent severe handling.

It was indeed true that they were wholly unfitted to struggle against an apparently fully equipped foe, although vastly superior in class of ship and weight of armament; yet the wonder of the British officers now became absolute bewilderment. How had this thing happened?

In a few minutes the Russian Grand Duke was tendering his sword to Admiral Erskine.

"We could not fight against a fresh fleet," he said in

excellent English. "My ships are practically disabled, and mere floating hospitals."

"Well, we are mostly paint and bandages ourselves," said the Englishman.

Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, stamped his foot with rage upon the deck as he glanced round and saw that he had surrendered prematurely to a foe almost as crippled as himself and of such infinitely less relative power.

"You must not take it too much to heart," continued Admiral Erskine, in kindly tones. "You could not have escaped. The Channel fleet is only six hours behind me."

The Russian tried to find comfort in the fact, but he was nevertheless furious at his own precipitation.

"Who fought you, anyway?" said Erskine.

"That irrepressible Yankee," growled the other. "He first tried to delay my operations, and when I refused to fall in with his views formed up his ships between me and the port. I had no alternative but to attack him—with this result."

The agony of the Russian Admiral was such that Erskine could not seek to comfort him.

The Russian ships then put about, and the whole company moved slowly on towards Cardiff.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHEAP STEAM COAL.

“O H, Irene, what awful news this is !”

“What ?” cried Lady Irene Vyne, starting to her feet with passionate intensity.

“Russia has declared war. The paper says that the information is authorised by the Foreign Office, so it must be true.”

“Is that all? My dear Ethel, I thought something had happened to Teddy,” and the pale-faced but imperious young beauty sank back into her chair with an expression of absolute relief at the insignificance of the intelligence.

“But, Irene, surely this is serious enough ! They say here that an attack in force may be expected anywhere on the coast at any moment. Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Liverpool are all anxious, as a Russian fleet has entered the North Sea, and its whereabouts is unknown, whilst the Russian Ambassador is leaving at once. The Channel fleet is at Havre, and is ordered back for the defence of the South Coast. The two special squadrons are recalled from Kiel and Stralsund. It is awfully dangerous for the troops, is it not ?” and Ethel Harington pensively dropped the fatal news-sheet and gazed affrightedly at her friend.

“Dearest, how can you think so? Have not our armies beaten the French and Germans every time they have met them? Are they not strongly entrenched with their bases on the sea, upon which no enemy’s ship floats save this new ally? If we must face the world in arms let us do it with the same spirit we have displayed so far. Let the Russians

send their ships. We will repair them and rechristen them in our dockyards." Irene's colour came as she spoke, and a fearless light leaped into her sweet blue eyes.

"I wish I had your courage," said the other. "But then, you know, I never hear from Frank, whilst you have news from Teddy so often."

Irene went and knelt by the side of her companion and tenderly put her arms about her. "Ethel," she said. "If I were told that Teddy was killed, which God forbid His merciful wisdom should so decree, it would break my heart, but I should still rejoice that my country had received the sacrifice. Neither men nor women must think of fear whilst England is in danger."

Tears rose unbidden to the eyes of both girls, and they were silent for a moment. Then a hasty step was heard on the stairs, with the jingling of spurs and the rush of someone in eager haste. The door was flung open and Major Harington entered, to be impulsively flown at and embraced by his sister and his *fiancée*.

"Oh, Teddy, how did you come?" cried one.

"And when did you come?" said the other.

"Do tell us why you've come."

"But we're so glad you're here."

"We were just crying about your imaginary funeral."

"And Irene said——"

"I'm sure I did n't. You began about the Russians."

Then both together: "Do sit down and tell us all about it."

Major Harington, looking browner and thinner than when they had last met, did sit down, but promptly jumped up and kissed them both again. He seemed inclined to repeat the process, but they seized him and held him in an easy chair, while Irene said:

"If you don't tell us the news at once, you will get no tea."

Thus coerced, he explained that Lord Roberts had sent

General Massy back to see hurriedly to some final details concerning the forwarding of the third French expedition, and that he, Harington, had accompanied the General as his A.D.C.

Great excitement and uncertainty prevailed at the War Office owing to the expected Russian attack. Lord Wolseley had delayed the departure of the first detachment of the Third Army Corps until it was known whether or not their services would be required to repel an invasion. It was not certain that transports accompanied the Russian fleet—that remained to be seen.

"As for me," concluded Harington, "I have exactly forty minutes' leave, and here I am."

"You 're looking splendid," cried his sister.

"I must tell my father and mother you are here," said Irene. "They will be delighted to see you. But before they come I want to give you something." She leaned over him, took his face between her hands, and kissed him.

This action, simple enough though it was, yet had an element of strangeness in its manner.

"That is very nice of you," said Harington. "But may I ask the reason of this special sign of favour?"

"Because I am proud of you, Teddy. If you had been killed whilst taking those guns I should have worn a wedding-ring all my life as a lasting token of my faithfulness to the memory of the man who was to have been my husband."

Lady Irene Vyne was thoroughbred right through.

On the morning of May 25th the early risers among the people of Cardiff were eating their breakfast and discussing the possible whereabouts of the Russian fleet, when a thrill of pleasurable excitement passed rapidly from the pierhead to the town at the news that a strong American flotilla of six battle-ships and eleven cruisers had anchored in the roads.

Councillor Ramsdale was the Mayor for that year, and notwithstanding the anxieties and duties entailed by the war, he never forgot the hospitable traditions of his dignified position.

He was soon astir and hastily convened a meeting of the General Purposes Committee to provide for the due entertainment of the officers of a friendly Power, as the hourly increasing sympathy of the United States had caused a keen sentiment of grateful kindness to spring forth in all parts of the kingdom.

As it happened, the committee, which met at ten o'clock, had a very different question for consideration.

Admiral Manan at once sent the first lieutenant of the *Farragut* ashore to ascertain if there were any United States vessels in dock and preparing for a voyage.

There were two, bound for New York and Philadelphia, and loading with tin-plates in the Roath Dock.

"When will you be ready for sea?" said the naval officer to the two captains, whom he found at the shipping office of the Board of Trade.

"To-night's tide," said one.

"Midday to-morrow," replied the other.

"I guess you 'd better sail in company to-morrow," said the officer. "You 'd feel kinder lonesome otherwise. The United States want those tin-plates particular bad?" he went on.

"Particular," assented one captain.

"It 'll be a cruel thing for Philadelphia if that white metal ain't delivered by June 6th," said his companion.

"And I suppose that six-inch shells and shrapnel won't hurry up the loading?"

"You can stand on me, Admiral; my ship won't take any more tin under them unfavourable conditions."

"Commodore, there 'll be a scarcity of tin-plates in Philadelphia for a considerable period."

The lieutenant carefully noted the names of the vessels,

the captains, and the owners, with the details of their charter-parties, and returned to the flagship.

Meanwhile Cardiff, and in a brief space the rest of the country, became strangely convulsed by the arrival of successive telegrams and telephonic messages announcing the passing of an unknown fleet of warships—flying no colours, but believed to be Russian—by Lundy Island, by the Mumbles Lighthouse, by Nash Point, and, finally, by Barry.

At 10.30 a.m. the sound of cannon boomed over the sea.

Twenty Russian ships—at last their ensigns were hoisted—were rapidly steaming between the Steep and Flat Holm Islands and Lavernock Point on the mainland, and the miserable little batteries at those places were feebly thundering forth defiance to the enemy.

But the Russians knew that the weapons, mostly dating from the Crimean war, did not even cover the few intervening miles of the Channel, dropping their projectiles harmlessly into the sea, and leaving a broad central passage untouched. They did not even trouble to reply.

At eleven o'clock they hove to opposite the town, but somewhat to one side of, and farther away than, the American ships.

The Mayor and several members of the Corporation hurried to the pier office in order to learn the fate of the port at the earliest moment, and the local volunteers—such few as were left after the drafts for foreign service had been met—and some companies of the auxiliary army, formed up in the same locality.

Lord Wolseley telegraphed that Sir Richard Harrison and staff were travelling by special train to Cardiff, and that 100,000 men with 200 guns, would be in the town by four o'clock. The Channel fleet, too, had started under forced draught from Portsmouth, where it had arrived from Havre.

The Russians had barely halted before a steam launch rapidly left the *Kronstadt*, and, flying a flag of truce, throbbed its way up the entrance of the Channel, finally

depositing a magnificent-looking officer and two juniors, attended by a small guard of marines, on the steps at the pierhead.

The Russian delegate found himself confronted by the Harbour-Master when he reached the quay.

"I would have the honour to see the Governor of the city," he smilingly exclaimed, recognising the official by his uniform.

"This way," was the stern answer, and the party marched into the pier offices, which were close at hand.

The Mayor stepped forward at once to meet them.

He was pale with emotion, but furious at the thought of the pending horrors for his town and people.

"Well, sir," he said, with all the calmness he could muster, "what is your business?"

The Russian still smiled, and explained, speaking carefully, but most politely :

"The Grand Duke Michaelovitch, Admiral in command of the fleet of His Majesty the Tsar, being instructed of destroying your docks and railways, is about to give them the dynamite. Also will he sink all ships in the harbour of you. He desires no evil to unarmed people, and women, and the child, but if any resist he will cannonade the city."

"Tell him, sir," said the Mayor, "that we fear neither him, nor his cannon, nor his master. Armed or unarmed, we defy him. And let me tell you, sir," he went on, with increasing vehemence, "that if you land here again with your men, we will improve your English and add a lesson in Welsh!"

The envoy understood sufficient of this forcible speech for his purpose. He bowed most ceremoniously, and was escorted back to his launch by the Harbour-Master, amid the dead silence of the onlookers.

The Mayor was the first to break the spell cast upon the assembled leaders of the community by the dread presence of the enemy at the very threshold of the town.

"Come!" he cried. "Let us arm ourselves as best we may. We must, if need be, die in our streets to keep back the enemy until help is at hand."

A German coal-shipper, naturalised by long residence in South Wales, who had joined the group round the Mayor, sneered at the folly of the proceedings.

"Steam coal vill be cheap to-morrow," he said.

The Mayor heard him and turned fiercely upon him.

"Have you any to sell, sauerkraut," he inquired.

The German was nettled at the nick-name.

"More dan you can buy," he snapped.

"How much, and what 's your price?"

"Ten tausend tons, at five shillings," cried the Teuton, who knew that in the event of bombardment the port would be ruined.

"Here 's a cheque for £2500," said the Mayor, seizing a pen and ink. "Give me in return an undertaking to supply the coal or its market price, whichever you choose, to me or my heirs to-morrow at noon."

The German did not hesitate, the documents were exchanged, and next day at the appointed hour, the shipper, almost on his knees, besought the Mayor to take £5000, and let him off his contract, as the market price of steam coal, f.o.b., was 16s. per ton.

Admiral Manan had not been a disinterested spectator of the passage of the Russian launch up the fairway of the Channel, and its subsequent return.

He forthwith dispatched to the *Kronstadt* the same officer who had landed at Cardiff in the earlier hours of the day.

When the Lieutenant was brought before the Russian Commander-in-Chief he was laconic.

"Admiral Manan, of the United States Navy," he said, "instructs me to ask your purpose in visiting British shores."

"I am delighted to explain to such a distinguished officer, who so ably represents a friendly country, that my mission is

to destroy this and other ports in Great Britain," was the Grand Duke's answer.

"Russia having declared war against England?"

"Exactly." Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, urbane though he was, resented the interrogator's manner.

"Has notice been given to the United States of your attitude?" went on the Lieutenant, quite regardless of the change of tone in the superior person with whom he was conversing.

"I presume so. That is a matter of diplomatic detail to which I have paid no attention."

"There are two American ships in dock here, and they cannot complete loading until to-morrow. They could not arrange otherwise, having received no warning of the outbreak of hostilities between England and Russia. Against a French or German fleet they take their own risk, of course, but in your case, and under the circumstances, Admiral Manan has directed me to ask you to delay your bombardment until these two vessels have loaded and sailed."

The Grand Duke laughed with angry surprise. "Preposterous!" he shouted. "Did anyone ever hear of such a childish request?" and he turned to his staff to volubly explain in Russian.

Every man guffawed loudly, but the American sailor surveyed them stolidly, though a slight flush came to his face.

"I have the greatest respect for your famous commander, in whom, as a seaman, I recognise a master, but I fear I cannot extend the same regard for his opinions on international law," said the Russian, who had now recovered his wonted complaisance.

"Admiral Manan did not send me to seek your opinion of his acquirements," was the calm answer. "I am here to state his unalterable wishes."

"Unalterable wishes!" growled the Grand Duke, again astounded at the language used to him. "You must have

misunderstood your commander, sir. Have the goodness to return to him and ask him to send a more intelligible representative—after I have finished my work. I am busy now.”

For the first time during the interview the American officer smiled. “I am using my commander’s exact words,” he said.

“And if I refuse this mad demand,” cried the Russian Prince, now thoroughly aroused, “what is the alternative?”

“You must first pass through the United States fleet,” was the quiet and measured response. The officer spoke as though he were uttering the merest triviality, but his heart bounded tumultuously as he uttered the fateful words.

“Holy Nicholas! This is too much,” shouted Michaelovitch. “Quit my ship, sir, and tell your Admiral from me that I give your two ships half-an-hour to clear out of dock, and your fleet the same time to shift its moorings. In thirty minutes I open fire.”

The Lieutenant saluted and tripped lightly down the gangway to his launch.

When Admiral Manan heard the result of the interview, his gleaming eyes alone showed the fire that flamed in his soul.

He turned to his flag-lieutenant and said: “Have all preparations been made according to my directions?”

“All, sir. Every ship has noted them and signified their completion.”

“Then signal ‘Prepare for action.’ Ships will follow the flagship at six cables’ length and take station accordingly.”

The United States fleet moved slowly off in the wake of the *Farragut*, and when they halted in line in the fairway of the Channel they were interposed between the town of Cardiff and the Russian armament.

At one o’clock precisely the Russians deployed for the attack, and the *Kronstadt* signalled: “I am about to open fire.”

“ Better wait twenty-four hours,” came the reply from the *Farragut*.

The answer to this was a shell, which whizzed through the centre of the American line of ships and finally destroyed the remnants of the low-water pier.

Admiral Manan was equally punctilious. A six-inch shell was sent shrieking past the bows of the *Kronstadt*.

Before it had dropped harmlessly into the sea far away towards the blue coast of Devon, so charmingly silhouetted against the bright summer sky, the two fleets were furiously engaged. Admiral Manan shouted to the captain of his ship, for an ordinary tone of voice would have been inaudible amidst the roar of the guns : “ If I ’ve got to be hanged on my own quarter-deck I ’ll have a jolly good fight here first.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EAGLE STRANGLES THE BEAR.

IT was no part of Admiral Manan's scheme to leave his ships as stationary targets to be battered by the superior gun-fire of his opponent.

No sooner did the action commence than he promptly echeloned the fleet to the east, thus effectully using his broadsides and compelling the enemy to change front in order to bring his full force into play. The manœuvre had another and important effect.

The tide was now rapidly moving down Channel, and the United States vessels in their new position had the benefit of a strong current for purposes of rapid movement and easier execution of tactics. Ship for ship and gun for gun the Grand Duke ought to have won the battle, and, indeed, he began the affair with a light heart as to its issue, though he bitterly denounced the American commander for so thoroughly upsetting his plans.

But in one respect out of many the Russian had seriously underrated his foe. He had heard of, but never seen, the dynamite gun—a fearful weapon to the development of which the United States had given particular attention.

Their artillerists had succeeded in developing to perfection not only the propelling power of this well-known explosive, but also in utilising its eccentric qualities in bursting the missile itself.

Gunpowder or gun-cotton has a direct and measurable effect in a specific locality when exploded by the impact of a shell upon the object aimed at. It also seeks the least

resisting avenue of outlet. Dynamite, on the other hand, is a variable force, and most frequently attacks with the greatest fury the point of utmost resistance.

The Russian ships soon bore witness of the demoniacal energy of this unexpected assailant.

Whilst the blows of some of the American shells did little more damage than was effected by the first shock—the resultant explosion passing away harmlessly or wrenching off some obstacle many feet distant from the place struck—the majority of effective projectiles did enormous damage, crushing 9-inch plates as though they were bonnet-boxes, tearing whole sections out of a barbette, smashing big guns out of their carriages, and, at times, wrenching huge lumps from the body of a ship.

Such terrific freaks of the giant explosive quickly demoralised the Russian sailors, and the battle had not long progressed before Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, ordered all efforts to be concentrated upon torpedo and ram attack.

But by this time the United States Admiral had received highly valuable professional assistance.

When the fight began, David Jenkins, master of No. 51 Cardiff pilot-boat, was standing in the bows of his smart little craft near the entrance to Penarth Dock. He knew that in the then state of the tide both friend and foe were in imminent danger of stranding during the rapid and often careless course of a manœuvre.

Now, David Jenkins was not cast in particularly heroic mould. He was short and stout and sailor-like, with a small vocabulary of common words but a rich stock of expletives in two languages. He yelled to his assistants to cast off from the buoy to which the *Polly Jenkins*—his wife's namesake—was moored, and run up the mainsail and topsail and haul in the jib.

In a word, Admiral Manan wanted a pilot, and David Jenkins was going to him.

If you can conceive what a fierce naval engagement

means, if you can picture a sea torn with projectiles big and little, alive with torpedoes, and swept with torrents of bullets from Maxims and small arms, you will realise the Inferno through which the *Polly Jenkins* passed like a pantomime fairy among the demons—smiling and untouched—during the next few minutes.

And what a roar went up from Penarth Head, from the masts of ships in the docks, from the balconies of such buildings as commanded a sea-view, when the people understood David Jenkins's motive, and saw him clamber up a rope thrown to him over the side of the *Farragut*, whilst a shell sent the smart *Polly Jenkins* to the bottom of the sea an instant later.

David coolly turned to help his mates, both of whom were saved, and then made his way to the conning-tower of the *Farragut*, where he found the Admiral.

When he heard the pilot's mission, Admiral Manan gripped his hand for reply. In five minutes the effect of David Jenkins's presence was felt. Two Russian battle-ships were stuck in the East Mud, and a cruiser was aground on a shoal off Penarth.

The fight lasted exactly three-quarters of an hour. At the end of that time two Russian battle-ships and four cruisers were sunk, their tops only being visible above the water, three were ashore, four others, mere wrecks, had struck their colours, and the seven remaining vessels, including the *Kronstadt*, were hurrying down Channel to return that evening in the safe keeping of Admiral Erskine.

Three United States ships had gone down and four vessels had to be rapidly beached on the West Mud to prevent them from sinking in deep water.

The American Ambassador, amazed and angered beyond expression, had travelled down from London in a special train in less than three hours.

Lord Wolseley had asked the Great Western Railway authorities to expedite him even to the detriment of the

movements of troops. At 4.30 p.m. he was at the pier-head; at five o'clock he stood on the quarter-deck of the *Farragut*.

In the first choking rush of his astounded indignation he demanded and received the Admiral's sword.

But he was a man and an American. As he gazed around and saw the havoc of the fight, with its glorious testimonies of a superb victory, his right hand instinctively tightened on the hilt of the sword and there was a suspicious weakness, almost a tenderness in his voice as he said: "Why have you done this thing?"

"Could n't help it, your Excellency," replied Manan. "Michaelovitch would n't allow our merchantmen to finish loading, and he was confoundedly impudent about it, too. It was a lovely fight."

"How many did you—that is, I mean, what explanation have you for attacking a neutral power?"

"Here are the documents of the case," said the Admiral, somewhat sheepishly producing a little scrap of paper, the memorandum made by the lieutenant at the shipping office.

The Ambassador pretended to examine it carefully, but he could not help giving a comprehensive glance around as he turned to lay the sword and its slings against the breech of a grimy and blood-bespattered gun.

"How many ships have you lost?" he said after a pause.

"Three," said the Admiral, "and four on shore."

"This is appalling. And the enemy—at least, I mean, of course, the Russians?"

"Six sunk, three ashore, four taken, and seven had enough. They quit."

"And—er—how—er, I suppose I am justified in asking. How did our men behave?"

"I know something about fighting at sea—theoretically," replied the author of the *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, with the modest pride of conscious knowledge, "and I may honestly say that I have never heard of a combat in which coolness, courage, efficiency, and daring exploit were

more magnificently exhibited than by the United States fleet which I have had the supreme honour to command to-day. You should have seen," he continued, warming to his subject, whilst the diplomatist's face flushed as he listened, "you should have seen the *Decatur* tackle an armoured battle-ship twice her size, rattle her ribs with quick-firing guns, sweep her decks with Maxims, shrapnel, and bullets, minimising the effect of the enemy's big batteries by sheer dexterity of handling, and finally sinking her with a torpedo. It was superb; it was worth living for, and dying for, ten times over."

"I came here at sixty miles an hour," burst forth the Ambassador, "but you could n't wait, I sup—" Then finding the Admiral's eye upon him, he corrected himself stiffly: "There is no use in continuing this absolutely distressing conversation. You must consider yourself a prisoner until I have communicated with Washington." He walked away to the side of the ship and murmured: "My poor friend, what will be the end of this?"

Admiral Manan, pallid but firm, glanced around at his ship and her noble consorts, as though to take leave of them for ever, when a slight commotion at the companion-ladder attracted the attention of both gentlemen.

"I tell you," said a resolute English voice, "I must see the Ambassador himself." Accompanying the words a tall, active man in civilian attire gained the level of the quarter-deck.

Advancing to the American Minister, he bowed and explained his presence: "I am the telegraph master at Cardiff, your Excellency, and a message has just arrived from the Embassy of such exceeding importance that I resolved to deliver it myself."

The Ambassador opened the envelope, read its enclosure through twice with growing amazement, ran the fingers of his right hand into his hair beneath his hat, and silently indicated to Manan that he was to read the telegram.

And this is what the sailor read: "London, 4.50 p.m. Following is exact text of cable just received: 'Washington, 11.5 a.m. President yesterday received confirmation of your reported rumour that Russia was about to declare war against England. Special meetings of Cabinet and Congress were at once held, and it was unanimously resolved that the United States should demand from Russia unconditional withdrawal of declaration of war. At 10.30 this morning Russian Ambassador announced emphatic refusal of the Tsar to comply with our ultimatum. At 11 a.m., President, with unanimous approval of Senate and Congress, declared war against Russia, Germany, and France, as the ally of England. Take measures accordingly. Further instructions by cable later.—Secretary of State.' End of message.—Secretary of Legation."

For fully half a minute the Ambassador and the Admiral gazed at each other in silence.

The sailor was the first to partially recover his self-possession.

"This cable," he said slowly, as though thinking hard, "is timed 11.5 a.m."

"Yes," gasped the Minister.

"And the United States declared war against Russia at 11 a.m.—the time recorded here?"

"That 's so."

"And I fought and whipped the Grand Duke, commencing at 1 p.m. sharp, winding up the action about 1.45."

Again there was a pause. Slowly a smile of complete happiness spread over the face of the Ambassador. Then he went to the place where he had deposited the Admiral's sword and its trappings, picked them up, handed them to Manan, and calmly remarked with a delicious Yankee drawl: "Say, you may have further use for these."

Admiral Manan quietly buckled the belt round his waist, for he dared not give expression to his feelings lest he should break down like a woman.

But the astute diplomat, quick to control his moods and impulses, saved the situation.

"Come," he cried, linking his arm through that of his companion, "I am simply dying to hear all about the row."

The one thing they did not discuss was the fact that Washington time is six hours behind that of Greenwich.

Those hundred thousand British soldiers came in useful at Cardiff after all.

Mayor Ramsdale "put up" a considerable portion of the German coal-shipper's anticipated cheque in securing huge stores of champagne and bottled beer for the particular use of the army and navy that night.

But, in the first place, with thoughtful care, he called for volunteers among the householders of the town to receive and tend the wounded, irrespective of race.

It was some hours before Admiral Manan was able to make the requisite dispositions for the safety and comfort of his shattered fleet and the captured ships. By that time Erskine had arrived in the roads, and the two commanders soon exchanged news and greetings.

Late in the evening they and their principal officers—for the American Minister was compelled to hasten back to London—attended a grand banquet in the Town Hall, whilst the British troops lined the long road leading from the Docks and the chief thoroughfare, St. Mary Street, in which the municipal buildings are situated.

The jubilant enthusiasm of the inhabitants of the Welsh metropolis manifested itself in every possible way. Hardly a living soul in Cardiff went to bed that night.

At the banquet in the Town Hall the Marquis of Bute made a brief speech, but it contained good matter. He undertook, at his own cost, to float, dry-dock, and repair the stranded American ships—a truly magnificent offer—and tremendous cheering took place when the Mayor read a telegram he received from the House of Commons to the effect

that Parliament had-voted the thanks of the nation and a sword of honour to Admiral Manan for his brilliant services to the United States and to England.

Next day the gallant American was handed by a Queen's messenger an autograph letter from Her Majesty, conveying her personal appreciation of the victory he had achieved, and stating that Her Majesty would seek the sanction of the President to her desire to confer upon the Admiral a Grand Commandership of the Order of the Bath.

Much comment had also been evoked throughout the United Kingdom by the patriotic behaviour of the Mayor during the crisis, and the national sentiment was fully expressed when he subsequently became Sir Joseph Ramsdale, K.C.B.

Throughout all this rejoicing there was but one slight note of solitary discontent, which found voice in the public utterance of a Swansea town councillor: "Whenever there is a chance of advertisement, Cardiff gets it. Even the Russian fleet passed us by."

CHAPTER XX.

ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES.

WHEN Parliament met on the evening after the battle of Cardiff it wore an aspect of serener dignity than its wont. This was the only external sign of the elation born of the new turn in events.

The period of excitement had long passed away, and the popular Chamber no more had its moods. Representing truly the genius of the English people, the splendid calm of the House of Commons amid all the varying fortunes of the war, its phlegmatic pride, its stern attitude of quiet resolution, formed a striking example of the indomitable character of the Saxon people.

India was massing her forces at Quetta, preparatory to the projected invasion of Asiatic Russia, whilst Australia had, practically unaided, flung off an attacking force of French and Germans. Her sons were even crossing the seas to reinforce the Indian army and home troops.

As day after day passed, each with its new and startling development, its record of heroism, its swift dramatic action, the House sat outwardly unmoved, betraying no emotion, grimly imperturbable.

To many who waited breathless in the galleries and witnessed the solemn scenes in which the great assembly received the daily reports of the Under-Secretary of War, and, with scarce a word of discussion, rapidly passed measures of supreme importance and far-reaching consequences, it seemed as if history had unrolled itself, and a return to a period of national danger had produced anew an heroic type.

For the members of the House of Commons, faced by dangers so grave, made one by the overshadowing menace of ruin, had revived in themselves those stern Puritan virtues which have left so deep an impression on the character of England. A meeting of the House was curiously like a meeting of that Long Parliament which sat through the Civil War. There was the same inexorable purpose, the same equanimity, the same high moral temperament, the same majestic gravity—scarcely a ripple of emotion, scarcely a word of debate, scarcely a hint of disagreement—the House was in the truest sense a single and united body.

Even to the casual eye this fact became obvious. In the appearance of the Commons there was something novel that would have staggered a Rip Van Winkle of a month.

The Conservative party greatly outnumbered the Liberal, and the accommodation to the right of the Speaker was consequently very inadequate. Etiquette gave comfort to the Liberals and discomfort to the Conservatives. By tacit consent the term Unionist was dropped, as being no longer distinctive.

But a week or so before the great battle of Cardiff, Sir E. Ashmead Bartlett, coming into the Chamber whilst the First Lord of the Treasury was making an important statement, and seeing that there was not an unoccupied place upon his own side of the House, calmly walked across the floor to the thinner ranks of the Liberal party, and in a nonchalant manner took his seat upon the right of Mr. Haldane.

The incident—despite even the gravity of the moment—produced a little laughter and some applause. But the ultimate effect produced was extraordinary. It was felt that Sir Ellis's act had in it a touch of genius. Of what use was etiquette of party when no party existed, or discomfort to the right when there was ease to the left?

And from that day, indifferent to points of custom, the members of the House proceeded to take their seats exactly where they found them. Liberal and Tory, Whig and Radi-

cal, Ulsterman and Nationalist were to be seen side by side as chance would have it, and for the first time in centuries the House of Commons presented externally no aspect of division or party.

Mr. John Burns was seen to slap Sir A. B. Forwood on the back, whilst next to him Mr. T. P. O'Connor chatted amicably with Mr. Austen Chamberlain. A friendship which evoked much comment was that which suddenly sprang up between Dr. Tanner and the Serjeant-at-Arms.

When Parliament met on the day succeeding the battle of Cardiff, there was no change in its attitude of dignified decorum. There was only a more crowded meeting and a subdued air of expectancy and unrest.

Amid deep silence, Mr. Balfour read to the House a communication received from the President of the United States, announcing the American declaration of war against the allies.

"This step," declared the message, "is taken with a full sense of the responsibility it involves. The American people have maintained their attitude of neutrality so long as hostilities appeared to be those of nation with nation. The intervention of Russia, however, transforms the war into a European conspiracy, in which the peace and prosperity of the whole world are involved. America regards it as a threat to the principles of liberty, and in so holy a cause she cannot hesitate. She will put forth her whole strength of wealth and courage to assist England, and her armies, for the first time in history, are prepared to take the field—if not by choice in France, where old ties make such a step distasteful—at least in Germany, Russia, or any other country that joint deliberation may determine. The American people extend the hand of kinship and affection to the British nation, and are proud that the traditions of the great Saxon race are now to be defended and maintained by the peoples on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean."

It was in slow and impressive tones that Mr. Balfour read

· · this telegram, and, as he concluded, he looked round upon the House and paused.

And then in an instant, nobody knew how prompted or suggested, the whole House rose to its feet and uncovered. It was an act of welcome and gratitude to a new ally: an act more impressive than the most clamorous and turbulent demonstration.

Mr. Balfour then proceeded with his speech. He uttered an eloquent tribute to the generosity of the American people, and in the name of Great Britain and Ireland, offered the thanks of the United Kingdom.

“There is no need, sir,” he went on, turning to the Speaker, “to use extravagance of language, even at a supreme moment such as this, when our feelings are likely to overbalance our judgment. Let us look at this offer calmly and see what it means.

“Am I belittling it when I claim that it has not come at a moment of desperate need? The English armies are sore pressed, but they are unbeaten; they have swept their way into hostile countries and have not yielded a jot in the great scheme of invasion. Our fleets on all sides have vindicated the invincibility of England upon the seas. And it is my profound belief that, under the guidance and protection of Heaven, the British people would have forced their way to ultimate victory, alone and unaided though it be, against the three most powerful nations of Europe.

“Am I wrong in thus emphasising the proud belief in the destinies of great Britain with which the humblest of her sons is animated—a belief in the eternal security of a nation which has, so far as human weakness permitted, based its acts upon the most sacred principles the world has known, the principles of liberty and righteousness?”

There was applause at these words. Mr. Balfour continued :

“But the victory, let us confess, would be long delayed, lying, perhaps, far off in a dim and melancholy day, the

passage to which would be filled with the groans of suffering, the lamentations of bereavement, the piteous cries of the fatherless and the widow; and stained, too, with misery, ruin, destruction, nay, even with famine and despair. This frightful passage we had entered upon without hesitation or misgiving, but let us be thankful that it is rendered shorter, lighter, easier to traverse, by the help and manly courage of another great people, the people who are of our own blood and lineage, who share our history, whose language is our own.

"Yes, sir, it is an alliance of which there should have been, could have been, no doubt whatever. It was ordered in Heaven. Nature herself called aloud for it; and if there interposed the mere chicanery of man, the interests of individuals, the narrow, selfish policy of ambition or of party, how futile and how powerless they have proved against the mighty and irresistible instinct of race, of family, of mutual blood! For America herself has risen in her strength and shaken off at a shrug the feeble manacles by which they sought to bind her; and over the ocean peals the great voice of our brethren, bearing a message of sympathy and help.

"Sir, is it unnatural? And am I right when I say that there could be no other issue of the desperate alliances amongst our foes?

"No; this is no mere struggle between one nation and another. As the American President has rightly said, there are deeper causes at work, there are principles fighting with each other, and in this stupendous contest seeking each the extermination of the other.

"This war means that the forces that have worked for selfishness, for aggrandisement, for slavery, for personal greed, are pitted against the forces that work for liberty, for progress, for peace. It is an old world fighting with a new; it is feudalism taking its last stand against democracy. Is the world to be the battle-ground of ambitious nations and cruel tyrannies; or is it to become a universal garden, smiling with peace, and ruled by temperate and beneficent wis-

dom? That is the tremendous problem which this war is to solve. And solved it must be. It is a war of extermination; it is, in truth, the Final War.

“And, if this be so, how else can we regard it, save that if Europe attacks freedom and democracy, she attacks the peoples who support and maintain these principles, in a word, Britain and America, the entire Saxon race? The quarrel that Europe has with England she also has with the United States. America is our heir. If we passed away as an Empire, in the death-throes of the fight, the splendid heritage that we have secured would descend in sacred trust to the United States, and it would henceforth be her mission to cherish, to guard, to protect it. That is why, surely, we had a right to expect the support of our brethren. The battle is once more between the West and the East; the whole Saxon race is against the rest of the world.

“It is our duty, then, the duty of the Briton, whether on this side or on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, to rally to the common cry, to overthrow the forces of evil arrayed against us, to demonstrate by might—as we are alas! compelled—our controlling power upon earth, and then with wisdom and benevolence to mete out the conditions of a new era, the golden era of peace, freedom, and prosperity.

“One word more, sir. Let us not be too jubilant. The way is long yet, and dark and heavy with catastrophe. We are few against many. We strive with odds that threaten by sheer bulk to overawe and overwhelm us. America is rich in war and in resources, but her army is not yet formed. She has once more to create a splendid military, such as that which, in the last war, won the admiration of the world. Let us, then, remember that a bitter struggle is still before us, that many a long day of sacrifice remains, and that there is need now as ever of the strong, patient, manly heart of Great Britain to continue in endurance and in magnanimity.”

Loud cheers greeted the conclusion of Mr. Balfour's great speech.

A few words of similar import were uttered by Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Dillon, and then a solemn and stately message of thanks to the people of America was framed and adopted.

If gravity and decorum prevailed in the House, there was at least excitement without. Not the turbulent excitement that a sudden sensation causes, but a strong and passionate impulse of national pride.

This great people had been prepared to fight on and on single-handed, not in braggadocio or idle vaunting, but with the calm resolution of their self-contained nature. The sudden news that a kindred people had come forward to take their share of the struggle had filled the English nation with emotion, a grave, sober emotion, such as one man in deadly peril feels when another comes swift and silent to his aid.

Joy reigned on every face. For instinct was truer than argument, and every Englishman realised how absurd were the artificial barriers that sought to separate the true members of a great race.

England and America were not cousins, they were brothers. It was impossible that England should stand idly by and see America worsted. It was impossible that America should see England at bay before the world and be mute. It was no alliance this. It was the reunion of one great family.

No less did the Americans in London feel the thrill of this new emotion. There were a thousand touching scenes in which the bond of union was manifested, as though it were the meeting of brothers after long separation.

Fashionable London was present that night at Covent Garden Opera House. There had been no break in the continuity of pleasure. The imperturbable Englishman ordered his life as before, and although sorrow had closed many houses and there was ever present the sense of national calamity, still there was no such concession to the foe as would be implied in universal mourning.

The music-halls thrived apace, and poets were busy on all hands in writing patriotic ballads which were set to music by inflamed composers. At the Tivoli Miss Marie Lloyd defied the allies every night at ten, and at the Palace Miss Lottie Collins created a sensation by appearing in the uniform of the guards and singing a passionate song that told the world that :

When in their envy nations rise
And to each other call,
And coward-like in swift surprise
Upon old England fall !
Roused in his wrath the Lion flies
And sweeps away them all.

Everywhere, on variety stage, in melodrama, from street band and hurdy-gurdy, pealed forth the strains of martial music, and life was made mournful to every earnest member of the Peace Society. Even Dan Leno linked his patter to patriotism, and no acrobat could leap from pole to pole without displaying upon his back the emphatic colours of the British ensign.

On Friday night the spirited managers of Covent Garden had announced *Parsifal*. It was the first performance in England, for the copyright question had been settled and English prejudice no longer protested against a sacred work upon the decorous stage of the national opera house. A huge and fashionable gathering had assembled, crowding every part, and the stage was filled with operatic stars of the first magnitude.

It is to be feared that Wagner was little attended to that night. A constant buzz through the house plainly showed that the music of the future had less attraction than the politics of the present.

About ten o'clock it was observed that the curtains of the royal box were fluttering, and then, to the enthusiasm of all, the Prince and Princess of Wales appeared in the full view of the house.

The whole audience rose to their feet and cheered and cheered again, and the Prince, with smiles, bowed repeatedly, the Princess meantime standing at his side, her arm linked in his.

It was noticed, too, that the Prince's eyes were wandering over the boxes on the other side of the house as if in search of something, and then, as if satisfied, he withdrew abruptly and disappeared from view. It was but for a few moments, however. What could express the delight and enthusiasm of the house when he was seen again in another box, bringing forward to the sight of all present no less a person than the American Ambassador.

There are some supreme moments when in mere vociferation the whole moral strength and feeling of a people exhaust themselves. This was one. The two who stood there, the Prince and the simple American citizen, the heir to the proudest of thrones and the commoner of the greatest of democracies, were true symbols of the great event that had happened, the reunion of the old and the new England.

"Mr. Bryant," said the Prince with a warmth that knew nothing of courtly ceremony, "your name is a fit one indeed for a representative of your country. We recognise her chivalry, and I thank you in the name of Britons throughout the world."

"Sir," answered the Ambassador simply, "we are all Britons. America, I assure you, is prouder to-day when she shares your peril than when in the beginning she claimed her independence."

There was an opportunity for but few words, for the excitement in the house was not to be allayed. It was impossible to follow the tortuous passage of Wagnerian phrases through the entanglements of bewildering orchestration. Already the audience began to rise and move about, to gather its wraps, and to discuss with animation the dramatic scene they had witnessed.

The stage manager, with true tact, saw that the perform-

ance could not continue and he ordered the curtain to fall. But a minute later it rose again. The entire company advanced to the front of the stage and sang, with a vigour and fulness which opera seldom knew, the National Anthem.

When the last strains died away there was a moment's pause and then Madame Melba advancing started the American Anthem, "Hail, Columbia." The audience joined lustily in it, and the whole theatre rang with the simple refrain.

The audience flowed out to the buffets, and there was an end to orderly speech. Everyone spoke to everyone else, and over a whiskey and soda a reign of brotherhood began.

"I can't do much," said one of the crowd to his own circle of excited listeners. "But blow me if I don't go in for American drinks. Here, Miss, a corpse reviver, please."

Never were the American bars so popular as through the next week or so. It was a tribute that the least might pay to a new ally!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NEWS THE SPY SENT.

THE people of England were now beginning to calm down to a grave appreciation of the dangers and difficulties of the war.

In the first wild days of public excitement, with their anger, their eagerness, their mad jubilation at the success of British arms, affairs had rushed forward in such a fierce and turbulent stream that a quiet survey of the situation was impossible and not to be expected.

But on the morning after the defeat of the Russian fleet by the United States force, the *Times* gave philosophical utterance to the national sentiment in its chief leading article.

"By the spontaneous action of our brothers across the Atlantic," said the great newspaper, "England and America now practically face the world in arms. The English-speaking race is called upon to fulfil its mission; to its hands are fully committed the future destinies of mankind. The duty to which we are devoted is noble yet awe-inspiring. We are no longer fighting a national quarrel, having become the trustees of human progress and civilisation.

"In this momentous struggle we represent the misgoverned and misled peoples of the Continent as completely as our own communities. When the stress and fury of combat shall have passed away, our first consideration must be the claims of justice and tolerance and Christian charity. Let us pray for light and strength to guide and sustain us in our task."

These magnanimous words were directed by a kindly Providence.

By mysterious channels they found their way into France and Germany and far-off Russia. They planted fruitful seed in the hearts of the true patriots in those countries, and in due course they blossomed into a vigorous growth which largely dominated the arrangements for satisfactory and restful peace.

The *Daily Chronicle*, too, found cause in the situation to become contemplative. "Lest there be any apprehension in the minds of sections of the English people regarding the attitude of the Liberal and Radical party," wrote the well-known organ of the Opposition, "it is our duty to finally and completely disavow all sympathy with what was once known as the Little Englanders.

"When our fleets are grappling with the navies of three powerful nations in all parts of the world, when our soldiers, in hundreds of thousands, are camped on the shores of Germany and France, when Australia is shaking off the wolves who would devour her, when our Indian army is tightening its accoutrements preparatory to invading Asiatic Russia, when the United States are impelled to cast in their lot with ours in the throes of this new epoch, it is no time to talk about Little England.

"The words in the past represented a policy, an honest endeavour to preserve the balance of power, a fair division of the yet unoccupied places of the earth's crust. To-day the mere jingle of the phrase is hurtful and ridiculous. We solemnly inter it. May it rest in peace."

Even Mr. Labouchere accepted the inevitable. "I can plainly see," growled Scrutator, "that the columns of *Truth* will be actively employed, when this wretched business is finished, in denouncing the grabbing and Maximising that will go on in Africa and Asia for a considerable time. Meanwhile, it is not Grab but Holdfast that is a good dog, and I will bark with the loudest in this quarrel."

The Stock Exchange being closed, its members, such as were not actively engaged with the army, naturally had their little joke. They telegraphed to the Chairman of the Wall Street institution: "We welcome your fleet. Where are the excursion steamers?"

But the Americans got even with them. Soon the reply came: "Excursion steamers all engaged in protecting Cardiff."

The new policy of diplomatic openness, inaugurated by Mr. Chamberlain during the Transvaal crisis some years earlier, was now emulated by the United States Government with excellent effect.

Daily, almost hourly, messages were received at the American Embassy from the State Departments at Washington, detailing the preparations for taking an active part in hostilities now being made all over the country; and these cheering items of news were immediately sent to the British Press.

Thus, one read: "Two army corps, of 100,000 men each, will be shipped from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia in detachments of 20,000. They will each carry full complements of arms, horses, ammunition and clothing, with large supplies of field stores, and may be expected to arrive in England, or elsewhere as directed, between June 5th and 12th."

And again: "The first contributions of America's aid will consist of well-drilled troops, but a subsidiary army of 400,000 men is now being energetically mobilised. Volunteers are pouring into all the centres of enlistment."

Canada, too, had fulfilled her promise. Fifty thousand men were already at sea, shipped in every possible variety of steam vessel, and an equal number were preparing to embark when transport could be provided.

Ariel, the famous New York weekly humorous journal, exactly hit off the situation, both political and social, by its cartoon.

England, by this time, had become one vast camp.

It was calculated by statisticians that the war expenditure by Great Britain alone exceeded two and a half millions sterling daily, whilst France and Germany were each piling up costs at the rate of a million sterling per diem.

Relatively the outlay of England was greater because she was maintaining fleets and armies at a distance from the base of supplies, but in every other sense it was impossible to estimate the tremendous loss which the allies were suffering as the direct outcome of the campaign.

Cut off from their colonies, most of their warships sunk or captured, all their commercial marine swept off the seas, compelled to pay high prices for such American products as reached them—these now to cease entirely—the two great Continental nations had already received incalculable injuries, and were soon to undergo the loss of all save the commonest articles of food.

Trade, of course, was much disorganised in England, and almost at a standstill abroad.

But in this country the commercial stagnation was not so severely felt owing to the fact that the coal and iron and shipbuilding industries had never been so busy. In fact, owing to repeated representations from local authorities, Lord Wolseley directed Sir Redvers Buller to cease recruiting men from the great metallurgical and colliery districts, as the demand for labour was such that the urgent requirements of the Admiralty and private shipowners could not be met if skilled artisans and miners were taken away to swell the ranks of the army.

Some difficulty was experienced at first in dealing with the great numbers of prisoners of war, particularly Frenchmen taken at the capture of Havre and the battle of Yvetot, but this question was happily solved by sending them off in batches into the agricultural districts, where they earned food and money by useful work.

Indeed they settled down in their new quarters for the most part with suspicious ease.

It was in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, and other large towns not specially associated with the iron and coal trades that the total loss of the Continental market and the shrinkage of the export trade all round, caused a stoppage of employment which, under other circumstances, would have resulted in much misery and deprivation.

But, as the direct outcome of the war, in which every Briton knew that he was fighting for his life, there sprang into existence a magnificent spirit of self-denial. Commencing individually, it gradually spread until it embraced all sections of society.

Every man was not content to have a sufficiency of food and raiment for himself and his family but he deemed it a duty to see that his poorer neighbours were equally well provided for.

In London, for instance, the inhabitants of the West End no longer held rigidly aloof from the people of Southwark or Poplar. It was necessary for the preservation of any that all should live, and when remunerative employment largely ceased, for the reasons already detailed, the Government started much needed public improvements, the rich spent as much money as they could afford in providing useful but otherwise unnecessary work, and public and private organisations took care that if a man, woman, or child died through want of food or exposure it was absolutely the fault of individual ignorance or neglect.

During these few brief weeks there was more practical Socialism to be seen in the internal economy of London and other important centres of population than had been dreamed or spoken of by philosophical reformers in as many centuries.

The general peril had caused the inhabitants of Clubland to realise that the coster was not a bad sort of fellow when you knew him, and the coster had been heard to declare that he never before believed "them bloomin' toffs had so much real good nater in 'em."

Strange companionships these, it will be said, but a forest

fire has produced stranger, and what belt of woodland ever blazed with such a flame as now lit up the Continent from Gibraltar to St. Petersburg ?

It was a time of trial, of development, and of great achievement for England. The national character came through the ordeal purified and ennobled.

Public curiosity had been aroused by several paragraphs that had appeared in the Press concerning Mr. Thompson, the electrical engineer, who was somewhat inconsequently dubbed "the Prince of Wales' inventor." But Mr. Thompson was adamant in his refusal to give information as to the nature or scope of his invention. All he would say was that it would be found valuable when the right time came.

The Prince, the Commander-in-Chief, and many distinguished officers had expressed their full confidence in its efficiency, and declared that the troops would require little previous instruction before using it with deadly effect.

Thus far were the reporters able to travel in their quest for this interesting news item, but the secret might have leaked out had not Lord Wolseley sent round a polite note to the news agencies asking that no further comment might be made upon Mr. Thompson's work, as it might prove injurious to the national cause. This was sufficient.

But it did not suffice for a certain quiet looking person, who said he was an Italian, but was really a native of the South of France, who rented a top floor in Soho, and whose daily avocation was that of a waiter in a restaurant.

The man was far from servile or commonplace in his appearance, but he discharged his duties efficiently enough and was never wearied in discussing the details of the war with customers.

He was so eager to ascertain the progress of events that he took home with him each night all the newspapers he could lay hands on, and the authorities would have been interested in his movements had they known that he wrote a *précis* of all he could learn in the smallest of handwritings

upon the thinnest of papers, which was then folded very neatly, inserted in a quill, and attached to a carrier pigeon, one of these birds being liberated at dawn every fourth day through a skylight in the man's lodgings.

As these pigeons flew to Boulogne, and as the messages they carried were forwarded to Paris without delay, it may be assumed that Pietro Marino was not his real name and that his ordinary profession had little to do with attending the beck and call of diners in a restaurant.

Marino, as he may be called, was very anxious to find out something tangible concerning Mr. Thompson's secret.

All the employ  s at work on the invention were fully aware of the importance of concealing their knowledge of its properties, but the spy determined that from one of them and by no other means should he get at the facts.

So he fell ill at the restaurant, and had to obtain sick leave, which he devoted to stalking various individuals among the men as they left the factory placed at Mr. Thompson's disposal by the Government.

At last Marino chanced to follow three of the men into a public house, and over a glass of beer he heard the youngest of them complain of the dearth of good wines and delicacies which his sick wife required, but which he could not possibly afford to buy.

Him Marino followed and accosted as the mechanic was crossing Waterloo Bridge.

"You are employed at Mr. Thompson's electrical works?" he said, speaking in perfect English and coming straight to the point.

"Well, is that any business of yours?" said the Englishman, whose temper was not improved by the reflection that chickens and old port were impossible luxuries for a working-man to buy during war-time.

"Yes, it is," replied Marino. "I believe Mr. Thompson has stolen my device, and I will give £50 to the man who enables me to prove it."

The man to whom he spoke was no fool. George Slater—that was his name—came to the conclusion that his interlocutor wanted to tempt him to no good purpose, and, notwithstanding his fluency, Slater believed him to be a foreigner.

“ Fifty pounds is a lot of money to a poor man,” he said.

The spy felt that his object was as good as gained.

“ I will give you that sum now,” he almost whispered, “ if you will give me full particulars of the—of the article Mr. Thompson pretends to have invented.”

Slater scratched his head as though in doubt, but he really required time for thought. At last he said cautiously : “ Let us go to a quiet hotel to get some paper and pens. I will then hand you all the information in full detail in return for the sum you name.”

When employed in Lord Armstrong’s works at Newcastle the Englishman had once seen a new breech-action tested, of which the object was to enable dynamite cartridges to be used in small-bore weapons.

The result of the tests was that several people, including the patentee, were severely injured by the bursting of the gun, and the guileless and easily-bribed Slater now proceeded to make drawings of this fine piece of mechanism with great care and accuracy, together with much written description.

“ There,” he said, when he had finished, “ that ’s the complete idea. We ’re making thousands of them, and they ’ll give the French fits when we can arm our men with them.”

The spy seized the papers and eagerly examined them. “ It is as I thought,” he muttered in a fury, “ this rascal has taken from me the labour of years. But I will be revenged on him yet. There is your money,” he continued. “ You have done a good evening’s work.”

“ Yes, so have you,” replied Slater laconically, as he counted the notes, and found that there was indeed the

amount named by his companion. "Now I must be off home to the missus."

The pair left the hotel coffee-room, in which they had transacted their business, and separated at the door.

Marino hurried off to Soho, but he did not escape the earnest attention of Slater, who dogged his footsteps all the way, noted his residence, and then started to see a friend at Scotland Yard.

"If I thought that chap would make that breech-action himself, I would not bother any more about him, as he would n't have long to live," he said to himself, "but I 'm blest if I don't think he 's a spy. He was too quick to throw his fifties about."

Slater interviewed his acquaintance at the police headquarters, and then drove home in a cab, laden with port wines, jellies, soups, and chickens, all articles still to be easily acquired by those who could pay for them.

When he told his sick wife of the trick he had played on the foreigner she laughed so heartily that she already felt better. Marino had at least benefited one household by his enterprise.

It was late that night when Marino retired to rest, having copied all Slater's notes on to the thin slips of paper that alone were fitted to travel by so small an express.

When the quill was packed and sealed and securely fastened to the leg of the bird, selected out of nearly thirty pigeons which he kept in an inner room, he set an alarm clock to wake him at 5.30 a.m., and then went to sleep, proudly conscious of having done a great service to the French Government.

But he woke somewhat suddenly at one a.m., to find himself in the clutches of two policemen, and for the summer months he was accommodated with quarters in Holloway.

The quill was opened and Marino's message read. A Foreign Office clerk was found who wrote a hand curiously resembling that of the ex-waiter, so, with a fresh introduc-

tion, the description of the dynamite rifle was forwarded to France a day later, and so long as the supply of pigeons lasted the French War Office obtained some truly remarkable and veracious accounts of the sayings and doings of perfidious Albion.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SECRET MISSION.

QUETTA is lively enough at all times. Perched upon the hills in that narrow province which keeps apart two savage and mysterious countries, it seems to look down upon them both like an alert and fearless sentinel, ready at a moment to give the alarm and call to action the sleepless army that guards our Eastern Empire. Quetta is the Metz of India.

This British outpost felt the thrill of its own power, and, like a strong man, was full of life and movement, as the English troops began to muster within the cantonment, and camp upon the hillsides.

It was an extraordinary spectacle, surely, which no country in the world but one could afford. The opulent East, with her infinite variety of race and tongue, seemed represented here in endless confusion; and over all dominated the watchful Briton, impartially supreme, holding firmly in his hand the ends of all this perplexed entanglement of humanity, the one being who gave harmony and unity to a bewildering puzzle.

At the headquarters' mess were gathered officers of all degrees known to the staff and of all regiments, and the crowded room was alive with animated talk, as men sat or stood around the table, snatching a hasty meal, too preoccupied to eat heartily, and flushed with the excitement which the near prospect of fighting roused in them.

Youthful subalterns, rejoicing in the sabretache of the

A.D.C., with the splendid certainty of youth, planned out a brilliant campaign and won a hundred battles against unheard-of odds; while the older men, anxious, though scarcely less excited, applied the fruits of their experience earnestly to the situation and speculated on the plan of attack.

At one of the tables there came a moment's lull in the conversation, and Captain Bradley, of the 2d Ghurkas, leaning over to Graham, of the 5th Lancers, asked:

"What has become of Adams all this time?"

This seemingly innocent question attracted to him in a moment the attention of all in the vicinity.

"Adams!" exclaimed Captain Graham, a little startled. "Yes, it's very queer. He got leave two months ago, and he has n't been recalled yet."

"What makes it singular," said Bradley, "is that exactly the same thing occurred to Hutchinson of Ours. He had barely come back from England when he asked for leave and got it, although there were definite rumours of war about at the time, and he's an awfully valuable man."

"Did he go home?" asked a subaltern.

"No, that's the funny part of it. Then, there's Haughton of the 36th Sikhs, and Anderson gave me four cases the other day where some of the best officers in different regiments had been granted leave, all at the same time, and in not a single case did there seem the slightest cause for it."

Graham stroked his chin reflectively and meditated.

"It's a devilish strange case," he said after this effort had brought him back again to dubiety. "Where are they all gone? Why don't they come back? Why are they not ordered to rejoin their regiments?"

"Yes; and why are they all such particularly valuable men?" added Bradley.

"It's jolly hard luck for them, anyhow. I wonder what Hutchinson thinks of being left out of the fun?"

"But is he?"

It was a meek lieutenant who spoke, and Bradley turned swiftly upon him in surprise.

"Why, what do you think is up?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," was the modest answer. "But it seems to me to be just a little too peculiar for a coincidence. There are about twenty of the best officers in the army, all of them of experience and peculiar fitness. They all take a holiday when they don't want it; and they all disappear and leave no traces behind them. If you think it's an accident, why, you are entitled to your opinion; but I say there's something mighty cute going on somewhere, and, you mark my words, they're doing their work somewhere, and will turn up all serene, just exactly when they have done it."

It was indeed a curious affair, but, after vainly trying to solve the mystery, the group of officers gave it up, pronouncing it to be inexplicable save in the higher logic of the Sirkar.

Perhaps their perplexity would have increased had they been witnesses of a little scene that was then in course of transaction in a small and wretched native village some sixty miles north.

As the Sibi-Quetta Railway drags itself with difficulty up the rough and hilly country which stretches to the borders of Afghanistan, it leaps a terrific chasm in the Pishin Range, and disappears just when it is reaching its final stage, into a tunnel. The traveller has had his last look at India, for when the train emerges from the famous Khojak Tunnel, it is brought to a stand in the little terminus of Chaman, and the Kandahar valley is at his feet. Here the great iron road ceases abruptly and almost reluctantly, and the civilised arts, thus pressed to the utmost limit, are bidden back by the triumphant barbarism holding its savage state beyond. The engine gives place to the camel.

But where sleeper and bolt and chain and rail may not pass, the pick and the shovel have forced their way, and a broad level road carries on the tale to Kandahar.

And this artery of commerce at every step whispers promise of the iron rails, for it has been made to carry them; and when the time has come, suddenly and swiftly, there will spring up a new permanent way which will carry the engine to the gates of the city.

It was here, at Chaman, and in view of the high road that penetrated the country of the Afghan, that Major-General Galbraith, commanding the Quetta district, stood in conversation with a tall distinguished-looking officer, whose charger's reins were looped through his left arm. At some distance, prepared as for a long and arduous journey, were four men, one an Englishman, and three of Indian birth.

There was an unusually grave look on the General's face as he addressed his companion, Captain W. J. Peyton, of the 7th Bombay Lancers, the man who had earned the C.M.G. for leading the Egyptian troops out of Harrar.

"I have kept to the last moment, by instructions from headquarters," he said, "the orders which I have to transmit to you. My duty is simple, and I cannot say that I can throw any light on most of the questions you have asked me. My instructions are to associate with you an officer of experience and special knowledge and three thoroughly reliable native officers, such as you would care to take on a dangerous mission. You are, I understand, satisfied?"

"Most satisfied," answered Captain Peyton, with a glance at the adjoining group.

"You could not have better assistance," agreed the General. "Captain R. G. R. de Vismes, of the 10th Bombay Infantry, is an instructor in army signalling, he has the certificates for higher standard Persian and Pushtu, he holds one for French, he is a qualified interpreter of German, and has a passed certificate for Russian. These qualifications, I am instructed, will be invaluable to you."

The Captain looked puzzled at this extraordinary recital. The General appeared to have been specially coached in De Vismes' many acquirements.

"Then there are not three better native officers than Risaldar Shah Nawaz Khan, and Jemadars Musa Khan and Gurdal Singh. They are proficient in tongues and all three are brave men," went on General Galbraith.

"But what am I to do with them?" asked Captain Peyton. "And why this costume?" and he looked down at his attire, which was of semi-native character, half-uniform, half-disguise.

"I do not know," replied the General. "You will find out later. Meanwhile, I am to hand you this packet. You will ride as hard as possible to Kandahar, and there open it. You will find a second sealed letter and instructions for yourself with certain safe-conducts from the Amir and others. Everything is there explained. You are not to divulge the contents of your letter to anyone save to Captain de Vismes, so that in case of accident to yourself he may be able to act for you. If you both fail then the mission is to be intrusted to the senior among the native officers. I am only at liberty to tell you that you must be prepared for very many days of hard riding. You are each provided with a second horse, and this will greatly facilitate your journey. For the rest, have patience; at Kandahar everything will be clear."

Captain Peyton took the packet and buttoned it closely beneath his tunic.

"I understand perfectly," he replied gravely. "I am thankful for the trust and for being appointed to this special service and post of danger. Whatever my duty is, I will do it as far as a man may."

"Good-bye," said the General as he held out his hand, not without emotion; "good-bye—and come back!"

In a few minutes the little company had ridden off along the great highway and were lost to view.

Sir George White, Commander-in-Chief in India, took the field in person at the head of the 1st Army Corps.

This consisted of 50,000 men, who were strategically

grouped to afford the utmost possible rapidity in concentration upon Quetta. The 2d and 3d Army Corps of 50,000 men each were equally well prepared in mobilisation and transport, but as they must be collected and forwarded from Bengal, the Central Provinces, Lower Bombay, the Madras Presidency, and even far-distant Burmah, they necessarily required more time to reach the frontier of Afghanistan.

Commissariat arrangements for each corps were quite complete, but owing to the limited capacities of the Sibi-Quetta line, and the Bolan Pass route, Sir George White decided that an interval of a week should elapse between the departure from Quetta of the head of each of the three great columns.

By arrangement with the Amir of Kabul, whose wishes were most ably and energetically carried out by Sir Salter Pyne, his trusted agent and engineer, vast quantities of forage and such stores as the country afforded were dispatched along the Hazara and Hari Rud valleys to Kandahar and Herat, which latter place, it was calculated, the advance guard of the British army would reach about the 28th of June.

From Persia, too, it was confidently anticipated that the acute merchants of Khorassan would send supplies of grain and provender when such a good customer as the Government of India was in the field.

Both Amir and Shah were fully aware that the conquest of England by the allies meant the prompt absorption of Persia and Afghanistan into the Russian Empire. Although the timorous Persian potentate dared not, at first, take active steps to assist the English by troops, he quickly made it known that caravans might, with all safety, use the Yazdin and Khaf trade routes, which was all that the British Commander required.

But Abdurrahman Khan, Amir of Kabul, was made of strong metal.

Horse, foot, and artillery did he muster with all speed, placing them unreservedly at the disposal of Sir George

White, and as a telegraph line now connected the Afghan capital with Peshawur, the Commander-in-Chief was, as we shall see, enabled to make use of these singular but valuable allies from the first moment that hostilities broke out.

The total British and native troops in India were 150,000, being almost evenly divided in racial numbers.

In addition to them were 60,000 Imperial Service troops, raised and armed by the different princes of high degree scattered throughout the Indian Empire.

The help of these levies, which for some years had been periodically inspected and approved by English officers set apart for the work, was promptly offered to and accepted by the Government.

From these sources, including the Afghan contingent, Sir George White calculated upon having nearly a quarter of a million of effective troops, all thoroughly seasoned to the climate and other conditions of Eastern warfare, under his command when he concentrated his forces at Merv early in July.

The loyalty of India had now been put to its first great test, and the country had passed through the ordeal exactly as most sensible men predicted would be the case.

It is not that the Mussulman and Hindu populations of that great dependency have, or pretend to have, any special reverence for British domination.

If there be such a thing as patriotic feeling or national enthusiasm in the East—a very doubtful postulate—it could hardly be expected to burn furiously at the shrine of a strange land 7000 miles away.

But that which certainly does obtain beyond the Exile's Gate is self-interest, and every personal and commercial instinct revolted against the idea of exchanging British for Russian rule. Every intelligent native of India laughed at the idea, and as the majority of the people neither know nor care who it is that governs them, the chance of Russian sympathies causing internal disturbances was slight indeed.

Nevertheless, to make quite sure, a number of Russian spies and some two hundred of the most dangerous fakirs were quietly lodged in gaol as a precautionary measure.

The only real danger to public peace arose from the *budmash* or disorderly classes among the population—that large and easily excited section of society which sees in rapine and revolution the opportunity for plunder.

Rich natives had more to fear from these gentry than the Europeans, as there is no pleasure in this world so keen for a Pathan dacoit as to cut the throat of a Bengali banker.

Special police precautions were necessary, and the volunteers, to the number of 28,000, were mobilised, supplied with ball cartridge, and kept up constant patrols in the bazaars and along the main roads.

So successful were the measures taken by the authorities that out of nearly 300 millions of people resident in the Indian Empire something like five-sixths of them never knew that a war had begun, or ended.

Lord Elgin was anxiously examining the transport and commissariat arrangements in company with the Military Member of Council, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, when the news came of the departure from Australia of the first contingent of 20,000 troops for home service.

“They are going by way of Vancouver and the Canadian-Pacific,” observed the Viceroy. “How long will it be before they reach England?”

“At best they cannot get there before the end of June,” said the officer.

“And by that time Canada and the United States will have poured ten times the number of men into France and Germany,” went on Lord Elgin.

“Yes,” assented the military member. “These cornstalks would be more useful to us, with our relatively small British forces, than to England.”

“Why should they not come to our aid?” cried Lord

Elgin. "Arrange at once that the Governor of Hong Kong shall confer with Admiral Fremantle and Major-General Hutton with the object of diverting the fleet to Karachi, and disembarking them there. Don't forget to promise the Australians that they shall have their fill of fighting before they see Moscow."

When the time came the Australian officers and men were delighted with the proposal. Thus it happened that Sir George White led into Central Asia the most mixed, and perhaps the strongest, armed force that the world had ever seen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CROSSING OF THE HELMUND.

GENERAL ALIKHANOFF was the man ordained by fate to lead the Russian advance upon India.

Himself no Russian, being a Daghestanu named Ali Khan at birth, the Kismet of the East, which corresponds to Napoleon's Marshal's baton carried in the knapsack of every private soldier, led him to high command in Central Asia. But the trusted representative of the Tsar must have a more distinguished title than ancestry provided, so Ali Khan became Alikhanoff, which is a fine-sounding name, and means a good deal on the Afghan frontier.

He was the central personage in Transcaspian politics, the wolf ever ready to pounce upon his prey, the living embodiment of the ceaseless creeping of Russia upon India.

But now the attitude of crouching watchfulness was abandoned.

Two words from St. Petersburg, "To Kandahar," set in motion the vast organisation which had of late been perfecting itself for the expected march, and the scar across Alikhanoff's forehead became livid with excitement as he gave the necessary orders to his staff.

The imperial plan was boldly simple. No nonsense this time about armies crossing the Alps of the Pamir region, or cutting their way through the rocky fastnesses of the Balkh-Kabul route.

These things were well enough to serve as twisters for the lion's tale in the piping times of peace. But when war, with its rapid menace and fierce directness was meant, the easy, fertile, and well-watered country between Zulfikar,

Herat, and Kandahar was the natural line of attack for the human beasts of prey led by the ablest officer in Central Asia.

Transcaspian, Orenburg, and Ural Cossacks, Turkestan and West Siberian artillery, the Third and Fourth Turkestan Infantry Brigades, with a number of picturesque-looking cut-throats from Askabad, Merv, Ferghana, and the Syr Daria, formed the excellent irregular force of 100,000 men with which Alikhanoff made his dash from Zulfikar and Kuskh upon Herat.

Nor did he pause there a day.

The small Afghan garrison fled at the mere news of his approach, and, disregarding the reports of spies who warned him of the massing of Afghan levies all along the Paropamisus and Sufed Koh southern watershed, he dashed onwards with impetuous haste.

For his absolute and final orders were to seize and hold Kandahar at all costs, and not to move a step farther until the real offensive expedition, consisting of 150,000 regular troops under the command of the Grand Duke Paul, had reached Kandahar from the Caucasus and Moscow.

All was in readiness for the *coup*—trains, waggon, supplies, on the lines of railway and at dépôts, steamers on the Caspian Sea to ferry the army of the Caucasus from Baku to Usum-ada.

It was a magnificent scheme. It had no defect in calculation of fact or detail, and it only assumed that the British lion was asleep until he was rudely awakened by the events of May 1st.

Now, man may catch a lion asleep, but he who says he has entrapped a slumbering tiger should be disbelieved. India crouched, it is true, but it was that she might spring the farther.

Alikhanoff's rapid march through Sabzawar and Farah, the chief towns between Herat and Kandahar, was of more interest to him than to this chronicle of events.

That it was a magnificent performance is assured by the fact that in the early days of June his advance guard of Ural Cossacks cleared a cloud of Afghan horsemen out of Chorab, which is twenty-five miles distant from Giriskh, on the river Helmund, and Giriskh is 100 miles from Kandahar.

The Afghans had been troublesome of late. They buzzed round the columns like flies round a carcase, and many a nomad's saddle was emptied, and many a Kirghese warrior bit the dust as they straggled on the outskirts, ever in quest of forage or booty.

But General Alikhanoff knew he must pay this toll in human lives when he passed the Gate of India, and he smiled as he glanced over the reports of his staff showing the excellent progress of the troops.

"My dear friends in St. Petersburg will be pleased when they hear that I am already within striking distance of Kandahar," he thought, and the parting of the thin lips over the firmly set teeth suggested unpleasantness for the "dear friends" alluded to were they at that moment anywhere near Chorab. The Central Asian commander had no cause to love the Court sycophants at the capital.

It was prudent to halt a little while, and pull his corps firmly in hand before he attempted to cross the Helmund, where the Afghans would surely oppose him in force.

"They are mere pariahs, these Shia dogs," said Alikhanoff, "yet can they bite. I must dose them well with lead when I get them packed together."

Not until June 10th could even his impatient eagerness decide that all was ready for the important step.

Many spies informed him of a large gathering of trained Afghan troops on the farther bank of the Helmund, and one man, a Hindu fanatic, warned him that the English were behind them.

"Yes, fool," cried the general, angrily. "It needs no wise priest to tell me they are at Quetta."

"Not Quetta, honoured one, but at Singbur." And

Singbur is but a few miles on the south side of the Helmund.

Alikhanoff knew that this thing could not be. The Indian army, at best, must now be concentrating at Quetta. A few squadrons of cavalry, with a couple of infantry regiments, aided and abetted by the Amir, might perhaps have dashed through Kandahar.

"What woman's tale is this?" he growled. "The *lal-coorti*¹ at Singbur? Impossible!"

"Nay, it is true. They swarm on the hill-slopes and in the valleys. May they be accursed," screamed the fakir. "You march to the sacrifice, O deliverer."

"And you shall run there, dog and liar," thundered Alikhanoff, thoroughly incensed. A minute later the fakir was swinging from the bough of a tree as a warning to all spies who give false news.

That night Giriskh was occupied, and by daybreak the passage of the Helmund commenced.

Some Afghan guns and infantry that would have disputed the crossing were quickly silenced by the West Siberian and Turkestan mountain batteries. Cossacks from the Ural and Orenburg plunged through the three fords available at this place and season, and spread fan-like over the country in front and along the banks to the east and west. Infantry, guns, and transport prepared to follow.

This, then, was the passage of the Helmund so talked of by the English. How they boast, these Feringhis. Is there not an interval for breakfast?

Yes, an eternity, Alikhanoff.

Nearly one-half of the Russian army had crossed the river, and in loose array advanced in the direction of Singbur. Before them the living dust-cloud moved, as the Afghans, with many a desperate Parthian shot, steadily retired.

And Alikhanoff, as he surveyed the advance of his troops

¹ Redcoats.

and saw that already he held in his grasp the river which barred the way to Kandahar, rejoiced in his heart.

"Raise your dust, ye Afghan vermin, the Cossack whip is scourging you," he shouted in exultation, as he saw the slowly disappearing cloud.

But suddenly there was an uneasy swerve among these same Cossacks. Their loosely-knit ranks reeled as if from a sudden shock and came to a confused and disorderly halt. A new and terrible sound smote the air and came to the ears of Alikhanoff, a sound that must have been known of old and feared by him, for he started and changed colour.

For as the Cossacks pressed on wildly, the dust cloud parted to the left and right, and through the gap there came a frightful roar, and a hail of shrapnel rained upon the Russian advance, shattering it into ragged fragments.

There was no need to ask what new thing had happened. The English had arrived and now on the open plain were waiting to embrace the foe.

"It was no woman's tale after all!" exclaimed the Russian general as he ground his teeth. For he, Alikhanoff, subtlest of men, had walked into a trap. Half his army was helpless on the hither side of the river. And beyond it his irregular troops, in no settled order, and unprepared for serious action, were hemmed in between two deadly perils, the English guns and the dark flowing river of the Helmund.

Perhaps this unexpected enemy was few in number.

He dashed along to the river, and made his way rapidly across, and then hastened to marshal his troops, throwing them out in a form best suited to meet attack, and to at least hold the enemy off till the remainder of his army had passed over the river and joined them.

But General Sir George White had no intention of assisting Alikhanoff in his admirable design.

The British army was not a large one. All told, the Commander-in-Chief had but 50,000 men, or one-half the num-

bers of the enemy. But there were enough for his purpose. Generalship can dispense with multitudes when Asiatics are in front.

The day before he had carefully selected a cavalry brigade of 5000 sabres, consisting of the 5th Dragoon Guards, the 5th Lancers, the 7th Hussars, the 16th Lancers, the 1st Bengal Lancers, the 5th Bombay Cavalry, and other picked native details, and, putting them under the command of Major-General H. F. Grant, ordered them to debouch to the right, cross the Helmund a few miles up, and occupy a hidden position of observation on the Kala Musa route.

"You will take no part in the engagement," he told the General, "until we have dealt our blow. I count on you to convert a victory into a rout."

To experienced officers this manœuvre was perfectly intelligible, but there was no little astonishment when it was found that a second brigade, of half the strength, consisting of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 11th Hussars, the 2d Bengal Lancers, and the 13th Bengal Lancers, 2400 sabres in all, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel P. K. Doyne, was ordered to the rear, in reserve, and that a commissariat of *sowari* camels, the most perfectly equipped of any that had ever been organised in India, was allotted to it. What purpose could this apparent waste of good men serve?

To the brigade itself the question was a bitter one, and there was much grumbling. For who that bears a sabre cares to see a fight afar off and stand like a child unable to taste of it. Colonel Doyne alone showed patience, as well he might, for he had his instructions, and much he smiled as he ran them over again and again with lingering fondness.

And now, as the Cossacks raced along, the main body of the army, hidden by the formation of the country, calmly waited their opportunity. It came when the wild Afghans, parting on either side, gave room for the British artillery massed in the centre,

The shock was terrible. As stream after stream of deadly shot poured impetuous into their ranks, the Russian lines reeled and fell. Nor did Sir George White give a moment's space for rallying. His infantry moved rapidly forward, sustained by the never ceasing guns, and flung itself with desperate courage upon the ranks of the enemy. The onset was as irresistible as it was unexpected. The Turkestan brigades, without guns, unprepared for attack, broken up and disordered, hesitated a second, and then fell away in wild confusion. But there came no lull in the severity of the attack. The British infantry drove them back foot by foot, relentless and untiring, until, unable longer to sustain so deadly an onset, the Russians fled to the river and sought to cross it.

Alikhanoff was in despair. Flinging himself wildly amongst the flying troops, he bade them rally at the ford.

"Dogs," he shouted, "are you to be beaten back by sticks?"

Stung by his words, a West Siberian regiment attempted to form upon the bank of the river. It was a desperate and useless effort. For like a thundercloud there burst upon them the whole strength of the Royal Fusiliers, who, at the edge of the bayonet, pierced through them and forced them into the river.

Crocodiles in the Helmund waxed fat for months.

And now the artillery, hastening up behind the infantry, took its place upon the shelving bank, and across the water there belched into the helpless remnant of the Russian army a storm of shot. Reply was useless. The Russian guns could only decimate their own ranks. Between them and the English was a panic-stricken border of flying soldiers, carrying with them the infection of their terror and breaking up the solid battalions which, helpless and stricken, lined the northern bank.

It was impossible to withstand so deadly a storm : before the tireless British guns the remainder of the invading army,

vainly struggling to retain its order, broke and fell away, and in half-an-hour it was in frantic and disorderly flight.

Now was General Grant's opportunity, and nobly he availed himself of it.

As the Russians spread themselves over the country beyond Giriskh the 5000 picked English and native cavalry dashed down from their post and precipitated themselves upon the enemy.

It was the last and deadliest stroke. The brigade struck the Russian force like a thunderbolt, splitting it into a hundred helpless and scattered fragments. Disorganised, disunited, filled with the mad terror that knows no limits, caring only that it should be somewhere away from the terrific and unendurable onslaught, the once magnificent army of Russia betook itself to aimless and pitiful flight.

Sir George White, as he swept the scene through his glasses, could not help feeling a faint flutter of pity.

"Poor devils!" he exclaimed. "They might better have remained here."

For he knew the Afghan, and what manner of welcome was already prepared for the flying army amongst those treacherous hills and valleys to the north.

Foremost in the pursuit was Sirdar Mahomed Khan, native aide-de-camp to Major-General Grant.

The Sirdar was thoroughly enjoying himself. Every thrust and cut at a Cossack was accompanied by a choice expletive. "*Sug!*"¹ he roared as he drove his sword through the ribs of a gentleman from Orenburg. "Son of a pig!" and he tumbled a Kirghese into a ditch. "Bazaar-born!" and a Ural nomad fell beneath his stroke.

At last his strong country-bred, sired by a Norfolk trotter from a half-bred Arab mare, brought him alongside a Russian officer vainly urging his tired horse to more strenuous effort.

It was Alikhanoff, desperate, pallid, frenzied with shame

¹ The Persian for "hound."

and rage, who, borne back through the Helmund by the press of the fight, now saw no alternative but to fly with the rest.

Mahomed Khan knew him in a second, even amidst the wild *mélange* of the rout.

“*Din! Din!*”¹ he shrieked. “Thou art running back to Penjdeh, then, O Ali Khan!” And he closed in to deliver a cut that should have cleaved the Russian commander to the chin had it struck him fairly.

Alikhanoff had no time to ask for quarter. But he tried to save himself. Rapidly wheeling his horse he disconcerted the other’s aim and received the powerful cut on the forte of his sword.

But the Sirdar was not to be denied.

By the force of his onset he was jammed up against his opponent. Quick as lightning he smashed the hilt of his sabre into Alikhanoff’s face, and as the Russian reeled in the saddle beneath the blow Mahomed Khan ran him through the heart.

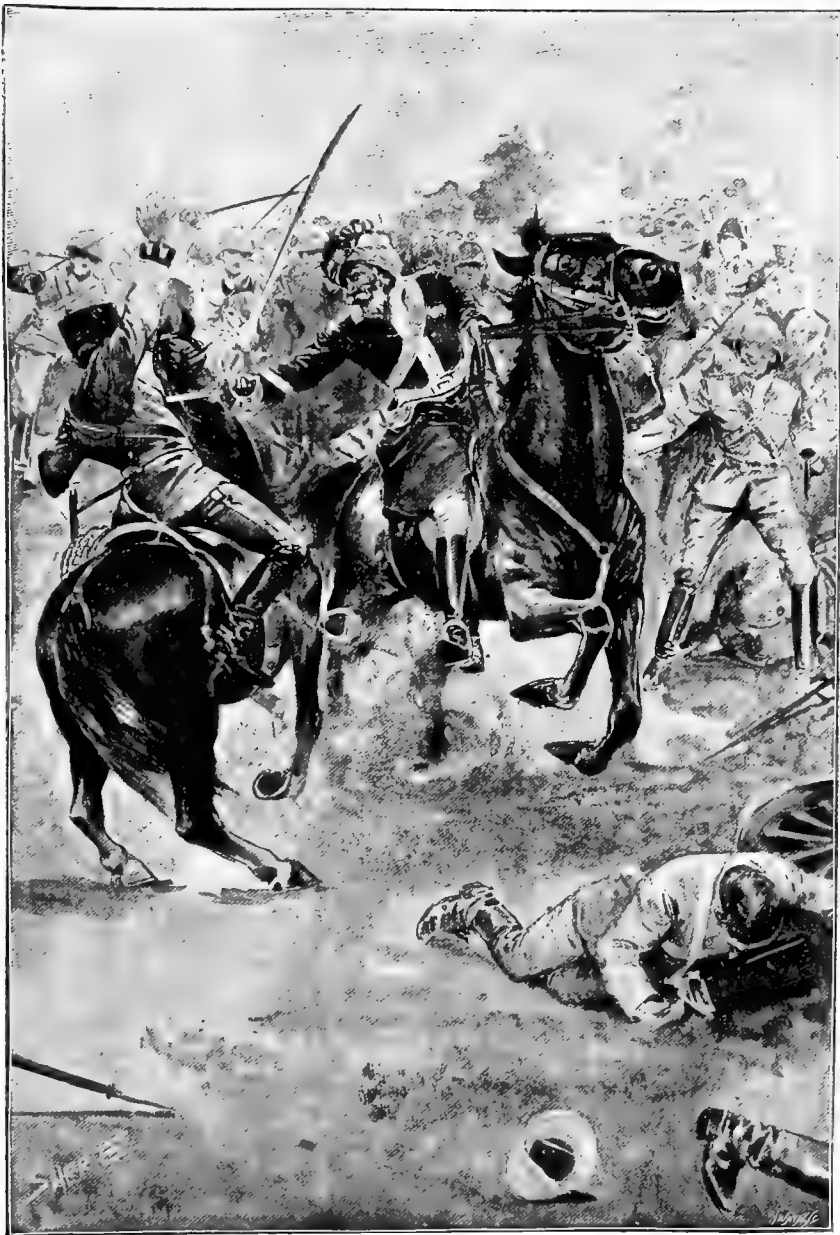
Calling two sowars the Sirdar bade them guard the corpse, but as he rode on he muttered: “I grow old, to use the point. There is more satisfaction in the cut!”

Meanwhile the cavalry brigade commanded by Colonel Doyne, now released from their inactivity, moved forward at the trot, crossed the Helmund, and advanced rapidly towards the north-west.

Many a fugitive Russian, seeing this compact force moving onward, and seemingly disregarding the pursuit, vaguely wondered, whilst he still had life, what its object could be, and when Mahomed Khan saw them he clapped spurs to his horse to rejoin his regiment.

Russia heard of that brigade before she heard of Ali-khanoff.

¹ The Mussulman battle-cry.



"MAHOMED KHAN RAN THE RUSSIAN THROUGH THE HEART."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RIDE THROUGH THE PASS.

A HUNDRED miles in twenty hours is not a bad performance over such a country as Afghanistan, even if the road be a good one like that which links Chaman with Kandahar.

Both men and horses were weary when Captain Peyton announced that they would make their first prolonged halt on a wooded slope which commanded a view of the famous Afghan city.

Under the peculiar conditions of travel all distinctions of rank disappeared in this small party. The leader attended to his two chargers as zealously and thoroughly as did the junior Sikh jemadar, and by rapid arrangement Englishmen and natives equally divided the other duties of the bivouac. The unusual circumstances of their yet unknown mission rendered it imperative that self-help and equality of labour should be the order of the day, and all shared alike in mounting guard, cutting wood, and the rest.

Culinary operations were the most difficult. The two Mussulmans necessarily ate by themselves, the Hindu soldier made shift to observe caste prejudices, and when dinner came to be thought of, Peyton and De Vismes gazed blankly at each other.

"Do you know anything about cooking?" said Peyton to his companion.

"Lots—theoretically."

"Ha!" The qualification sounded suspicious.

"I have learnt the names of various dishes in ten lan-

guages," explained De Vismes. "For instance, the Russian for Irish stew is—"

"Look here, old chap," broke in Peyton. "I will cut a double share of grass for the gees, if you will undertake the stew in any language you like."

"Agreed," cried De Vismes. "To-day it shall be *Étuvée à la Kandahar*."

A young goat which they had bought at a village for a few annas supplied the meat, and the Mahommedans had already secured some sweet potatoes, of which De Vismes obtained a share. Salt they had brought with them, and the result of an hour's assiduity produced an excellent meal and a liberal supply of grass-roots for the horses.

It was then that Peyton was able to open his sealed packet and learn the full extent of the task intrusted to him. An autograph letter from Sir George White was quite explicit.

"You will proceed," wrote the Commander-in-Chief, "with the utmost possible dispatch to Turbat-i-Shaikh-Janni, on the Herat Meshed road. There you will find Captain Adams of the 5th Lancers, who is awaiting you. If not he, Captain Hutchinson of the 2d Gurkhas will be in his place. Should you arrive safely, either of these officers will acquaint you with the intentions of the Government of India. You will be in supreme command, and it is left to your discretion to act at the right moment. This you will easily determine when you have reached your destination.

"Communicate the contents of this letter to the British officer selected to accompany you, so that in the event of accident to yourself he may fulfil your mission. In the latter event the command at Turbat and during subsequent operations will be settled by seniority.

"Should it be an open question whether or not either of you can reach Turbat, your destination only must be told to the native officers in your party, so that if any one of them gain the desired end of the journey, the officer he meets will

understand what has happened, and may be trusted to do what is best fitted in his judgment.

"The native officers should be individually instructed to deliver a message to that effect.

"When you have read this document to your companion burn it. I inclose a sketch map of your best route, with all possible information marked thereon by the Intelligence Department, and you will also find herewith safe conducts signed by the Amir of Afghanistan and the Shah of Persia.

"You must allow neither your own life, nor the lives of your companions, nor of your opponents, to stand in the way of the accomplishment of this mission.

"I have only to wish you success, and to assure you of the keen appreciation that will be manifested by the Government of India, if you and your companions are able to fully carry out their desires."

Peyton read this remarkable document twice slowly, and then he called De Vismes, and went through it again, aloud.

"We seem to have got a tolerably tall order," was De Vismes' comment.

"Why do you think so?" said Peyton. "There surely need not be more than ordinary difficulty in getting through to Turbat-and-the-rest-of-it—unless——"

"Yes, unless the Russians are already in the way. That's exactly what the chief expects; hence your burning the letter in case it should fall into their hands."

"The presence of a few sotnias of Cossacks between us and the frontier of Persia will certainly complicate matters," replied Peyton with a smile. "Meanwhile, pass a cigar. I am going to burn this thing, and we must not waste matches."

"It seems to me," went on De Vismes thoughtfully, "that even when we reach Turbat the business is only beginning. We have got a great chance, old man. Let's have a look at the passports."

He examined the two documents whilst the cigar and the

letter were being ignited. They were written in the Persi-Arabic character, which he readily deciphered. Then he laughed.

"These safeguards are typical of the men," he explained. "The Shah uses a lot of circumlocution and flowery phrases, and explains that we are engaged, so far as he knows, on a peaceful mission, the nature of which he does n't state, but he enjoins all his servants to help us with food and forage for the horses if necessary. The Amir, on the other hand, comes to the point at once. Here is what he says: 'The bearer is my friend. He who refuses to assist him is my enemy. Signed,—ABDURRAHMAN KHAN.' Quite explicit, is n't it?"

"Yes, to those who know the ways of Kabul," said Peyton, and the two officers then carefully scrutinised the map. By travelling fifty miles a day, which would be a phenomenal performance in such country, they would be in Turbat-i-Shaikh-Janni in eight days. And the Cossacks were already in Herat—but this they did not learn until later.

Their second halt was at Maiwand.

The swiftly-flowing waters of the treacherous river, though sparkling and iridescent in the declining light of the hot May evening, did not fail to evoke bitter thoughts in the hearts of the Englishmen, whilst the natives condemned the stream in the choicest phrases of the Urdu language—a tongue particularly rich in the vocabulary of objurgation.

Indeed they were relieved to quit the place and its painful memories of British disaster when the first faint streaks of dawn gave light to show the road. Thence they crossed the Helmund at Haidrabad and took the direct, if difficult, route to Taiwarah.

By this means they hoped to gain Kuhsan on the Persi-Afghan frontier by an unfrequented road and without attracting undue observation.

Towards the close of the fourth day, whilst they were travelling rapidly through the valley of a tributary of the

Farah-Rud river, one of the horses fell dead lame. He was stripped, his trappings thrown into a nullah, and turned loose, but the poor beast continued to hobble after them, and was not driven off until the rissaldar had laid about him with a heel-rope.

They halted in a tope of trees about a mile further on, and, as was their invariable custom, selected a spot which commanded a good view of the surrounding country.

Not expecting any immediate danger, they were about to kindle a fire when the Sikh uttered a warning cry, and at once the eyes of the whole party were riveted upon an irregular crowd of horsemen coming down the valley on the watershed of which they had bivouacked.

Peyton knew that he and his companions were hidden from observation by the trees, but as a precautionary measure the horses' girths were tightened again, and then the proceedings of the newcomers were watched with interest.

They did not long leave the British soldiers in doubt as to their identity.

"Cossacks from the Ural," whispered De Vismes. "I know their head-dress well, as I once lived among 'em for a month."

"Then the Russians are advancing on Kandahar," said Peyton. "Thank Heaven our fellows will be there to meet them."

The enemy came momentarily nearer, and were evidently about to pass them at a distance of half a mile, close to the banks of the shallow river which ran north-west towards the Farah-Rud.

"It's a jolly good job they don't go in for scouting on the hillsides," murmured Peyton. "Otherwise we should be in trouble."

The Cossacks had reached the nearest point to the concealed party when the unexpected happened. The discarded charger, who had made his way to the water, seeing a troop of horsemen, had cantered off to them on three legs, and

whinnied his delight at again falling in with his own kind. Instantly the three native officers sprang to their blankets in order to smother the cries of any of their animals that might choose to give tongue in reply, but, old campaigners as they were, the other troop-horses were too busy with their feed to indulge in conversation.

The Cossacks halted at the somewhat singular encounter, and some of them dismounted to examine the prize. At once a great deal of gesticulation and excitement arose in their midst.

"They have found the regimental number on his hoof," growled De Vismes.

"Yes," said Peyton grimly. "We must spare no more lives," and he thought of the concluding words of the Commander-in-Chief's letter.

"It's a good job we did n't shoot him."

"True, but we might have stabbed him. I trust they won't find the saddlery."

The Cossacks deliberated for some time, and then pushed on rapidly southwards, whilst they now detached scouting parties on the hills.

"That was a close call," observed De Vismes, drawing a deep breath.

"Very. In half-an-hour's time we will drop over into the next street," said Peyton, meaning that they would traverse the ridge and try the neighbouring valley as a safer route.

Nothing happened that night or the next day when they crossed the track leading from Herat to Zulfikar. As the evening of the seventh day came on they cautiously approached the Kuhsan Pass. Once safely through this, they had only two days of hard riding before them, as they would be in Persian territory.

But although the goal was so near, Peyton resolved to leave nothing to chance.

The country was well wooded up to the mouth of the pass, so he halted his little company in a secluded spot some two

miles distant from the cleft in the hills through which ran the caravan route, and sent Gurdal Singh forward on foot to reconnoitre.

The Sikh was absent three hours, and Peyton was becoming anxious ; darkness came, and there still was no sign of the jemadar.

At last he returned, breathless but imperturbable.

"What news, jemadar?" said the Commander.

"Ill news, sahib," was the reply. "A hundred Cossacks are eating round their fires about a quarter of a mile from the pass, and a sentry is placed where the road enters the hills."

The annoyance and amazement of the two officers at these tidings were best signified by silence. At last Peyton said : "We must get through to-night."

"Of course," answered De Vismes. "But how? To attempt to rush it means death for the lot of us."

"We must think of some means," said the other, and he called to him Rissaldar Shah Nawaz Khan, who knew this part of the country thoroughly, having served on an escort for a boundary commission in the locality.

The Mohammedan, having questioned the Sikh, explained that the Cossacks were encamped on a piece of level ground on one side of a small stream which issued from the pass. It would be possible in the night to reach unobserved the entrance to the pass by the other side of the stream, crossing the water at the nearest point, and making a dash for the road.

But there was the sentry.

"Leave him to me," said Shah Nawaz Khan, with a complacent grin. "I have often crept into a Keddah, sahib, when a boy, and thrown a noose round the leg of an elephant. A Cossack's neck is not nearly so thick."

"This sounds deuced like murder," said Captain Peyton in English. "Remember, Shah Nawaz Khan," he continued, "I would not have the man killed if it can be avoided. Can you disarm and gag him quietly?"

“ Protector of the Poor, it is done.”

Shortly before midnight the five men, having selected the best of the horses, and hobbled the others to prevent them from following, reached the farther side of the stream, whose noisy progress effectually drowned the sounds of the horses' feet. They cautiously examined the Cossack encampment which was plainly visible in a flood of brilliant moonlight. They could also see the sentry, and whilst they were arranging their final plan of action the relief was effected.

“ His hour has not come,” murmured Shah Nawaz Khan to his compatriot as they watched the Cossack whose turn of duty had expired returning to the bivouac.

An idea now occurred to Peyton. Not only must they get safely into the pass, but the Cossacks must be sent off on the wrong scent, or the gagged sentry must soon be discovered and a pursuit established.

“ Gurdal Singh,” he said to the Sikh. “ Take your horse and return. Cross the stream lower down, and in half an hour ride openly toward the encampment. Go as near as you can with safety, fire your carbine at them, yell as loud as you are able, and then do your best to escape. Here is a letter from the Amir if you fall in with any Afghans. You must endeavour to return to Kandahar and report our progress. I will see to it that you are rewarded.”

“ Salaam, sahib !” returned the Sikh gravely, and he led off his horse without another word.

At the same moment Shah Nawaz Khan slipped away into the shadows like a ghost, having divested himself of his boots and most of his clothing. He only carried a heel-rope and a knife.

A cloud passed over the moon, plunging the landscape into darkness, and for fifteen weary minutes the others waited in ill-sustained suspense.

Then a dark form crept up from the river bank and a gruff voice said :

“ It is done, sahib. Give me a minute to clothe myself.”

“ Is he bound and gagged ? ” said Peyton, leaning towards the place where Shah Nawaz Khan was wriggling into his accoutrements.

“ He is bound, sahib, but the gag slipped.” Then, after a tug at a boot, the rissaldar added : “ Nevertheless he will not speak.”

Peyton remembered the Commander-in-Chief's instructions and asked no more questions.

To cross the stream and quietly glide into the gloom of the pass was now an easy matter. This was hardly accomplished when a couple of rifle shots rang out in the still air in quick succession, and they could plainly hear the shouting of the Cossacks as they sprang to arms.

Silently and doggedly the four soldiers urged on their tired horses. The ascent was short but steep. By two o'clock they were nearing the summit of the pass when they heard an unmistakable sound some distance in the rear. The crack of the Cossack whip, and cries of encouragement to animals as a party of pursuers rode after them, came up from the cavernous depths of the defile.

“ They have found the sentry,” said Peyton. “ Only a few of them must have followed the Sikh.”

“ Allah has permitted it,” said Shah Nawaz Khan, “ but the prophet himself could not make their sentry tell that which he saw.”

Then the full and terrible significance of his orders came to Peyton's mind for the first time.

“ You must remain here and bar the way as long as you can,” he said to the two Mahommedans.

“ It is done,” they both replied.

Shah Nawaz Khan continued, without the slightest tremor in his voice : “ I have a wife and three little ones in the cavalry bazaar at Shikarpur.”

“ My aged father and mother live at Delhi,” said Jemadar Musa Khan, “ and I send them a quarter of my pay every month.”

"They shall not want whilst the Sirkar reigns," replied Peyton, choking down his emotion. "May God guard you."

"Salaam, sahib," cried both men, and they dismounted. The last that Peyton and De Vismes saw of them they were striving to prise a big rock into the middle of the narrow and precipitous mountain path, which here overhung a steep gorge.

The officers rode forward in silence, and in a little while they heard rapid firing in the rear. They continued in a desultory manner for some time, and then died away; but there appeared to be no further pursuit.

"The majority of those shots were from Lee-Metford carbines," said De Vismes.

"Well they might be," replied Peyton, who was bitter with grief at the loss of the two brave men he had been compelled to leave to certain death.

"The last shots certainly were," persisted the other.

"It is impossible that they should escape. Why, there were probably fifty Cossacks."

"True, but the fifty don't know how many they are facing."

Further conversation was, however, out of the question. The road in the descent became momentarily worse. Fortunately the sky had cleared again and the moonlight enabled them to pick their way, else they would inevitably have blundered down into the rocky abyss through which a new stream was now threading its way into Persia. Judging by the roar which came up out of the depths there must be a considerable volume of water, and it was evident that several torrents, converging from other spurs in the hills, had here found a common channel.

Their horses were now almost dead beat, and they were practically in the same condition themselves, but they kept doggedly on till dawn came, and they neared the Persian end of the defile.

But who can picture their dismay when, on emerging into

a comparatively open valley, they plainly saw another Cos-sack encampment about a mile distant?

"Alikhanoff must have had some inkling of a counter move from Persia," said De Vismes. "He has evidently seized every caravan route."

"It is to stop supplies reaching our troops from this side," said Peyton. "There is nothing for it but to cross the river and try to escape towards the north before we are seen. It will be a nasty job, especially with horses so done up as ours are."

True enough, this was their only resource. Taking advantage of the cover of some trees they boldly advanced into the stream, and the chargers, freshened by the water dashing against their flanks, gallantly essayed the difficult passage.

In such a turbulent and fierce-rushing current it was useless to dismount and cling to mane or tail. They must either gain the other side with comparative ease or be swept away by the force of the swirling and eddying river.

For a few moments all went well. Then De Vismes' horse, slipping on a loose stone, plunged violently, rolled over, and Peyton saw animal and rider hurled headlong by the current into a vortex of foam. They disappeared momentarily, but he caught glimpses of them as they fought madly for life when they rose again many yards further on.

Horried beyond expression, he seemed to lose all muscular power, and would infallibly have met the same fate if his gallant Waler had not scrambled into safety on the opposite bank.

It was hopeless to think of helping De Vismes, or looking for him. One of the five was left, and he still had sixty long miles before him.

Peyton rode forward as in a dream until he reached a friendly wood, where he fell rather than dismounted from his charger, and lay for a little while on the ground, utterly powerless.

And the only concrete idea he possessed seemed to be fixed in his brain in letters of fire. Had not the Commander-in-Chief written :

“ You must allow neither your own life, nor the lives of your companions, nor of your opponents, to stand in the way of the accomplishment of this mission.”

“ Chicken broth and warm milk are all very well, old chap, when a man is as *fin de siècle* as you were on Wednesday, but I think the time has really arrived when a peg would do you good. I have saved a whole bottle of the best for three hot weeks in expectation of your coming, and there 's half a dozen of soda swinging in wet towels in the verandah.”

It was Captain Adams, of the Royal Irish Lancers, who spoke, and he affected a merriment he was far from feeling as he gazed at Peyton, stretched listlessly on a charpoy beneath an awning rigged up in front of the principal abode in Turbat-i-Shaikh-Janni.

Not a word had Peyton spoken for thirty-six hours after he fell senseless at Adams's feet muttering before consciousness fled : “ Russia—war—come from Quetta—search for De Vismes—carried away river.”

By careful treatment the lancer had succeeded in saving Peyton's life, and believing that some tragedy had occurred, he sent out a large party of Persian horsemen to scour the country, but they returned to report that they had discovered nothing save the presence of some Cossacks at the mouth of the Kuhsan Pass.

It was now the evening of Sunday.

Peyton was much better and able to grasp the tremendous importance of his journey when Adams had explained why he and nineteen other British officers had been living for six weeks on the Persian frontier, close to the Central Asian Railway.

“ Come,” said Adams, “ a small dose of whiskey and soda

will give you an appetite. I must pack you into a *palki*¹ to-morrow, and carry you off to Mahommadabad, which we have made our centre. There you will find six or seven other men, who have charge of sections. It is a great scheme, I can assure you."

"I will be ready," said Peyton. Then he added gravely : "Is there any news of De Vismes?"

"Not the slightest. Heaven knows where that beastly river would carry him to. It runs into nowhere."

Whereby Adams meant that the torrent was one of those numerous Central Asian streams which, rising in the hills, finally lose themselves in the midst of desert wastes of sand.

Peyton was much cast down for a while. But, thorough soldier as he was, he knew that his brave comrades, Englishmen and natives, had succumbed to the lottery of war.

He declined the proffered peg, but asked for a cheroot. Adams and he were lighting their cigars when they noticed three wretched-looking men attired in a remarkable manner, and mounted on small ponies, coming through the bazaar, attended by a curious crowd.

Peyton suddenly forgot his weakness. He leaped to his feet and yelled : "By —, it's De Vismes and the two sowars!"

And it was.

De Vismes had been deposited on a sand-bank, and had thence crawled, with a sprained wrist and a bruised knee, to a Persian village, where he lay quite prostrate for the best part of two days.

Here he was found by the Risaldar and Musa Khan, who had driven back the Cossacks by first firing at them briskly in the darkness, and then causing their own two chargers, by lashing them with their sabres, to gallop madly down the narrow path and precipitate nearly a dozen of the astounded

¹ A covered litter.

pursuers into the ravine, where they were found by the kites next day.

The two Mahommedans crossed to the north of the stream higher up than the officers, and thus escaped the second batch of Cossacks in their turn.

And these things formed but a feeble prelude to the events that followed.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER AGINCOURT.

“COMRADES,” wrote Lord Roberts in a proclamation issued to the army on June 1st, “in the forthcoming battle with the French, England demands our services under circumstances that have seldom, if ever before, occurred in her glorious history.

“We must, at all hazards, utterly rout and destroy the enemy.

“This is the crucial struggle of the campaign. The best troops of France are opposed to us. Their numbers far exceed our own, but I know that they cannot equal us in courage, in discipline, in every splendid quality that is found in the British soldier.

“To our hands are committed the destinies of our beloved country. Strong in that sacred trust, I feel in my heart that the issue is already determined. Let us resolve that, God willing, our confidence in victory shall be justified by the result. We must deal the enemy such a blow that the power of France will stagger helpless from our path.”

The Commander-in-Chief would not have uttered these stirring words to his men had there not been desperate need for the display of that calm courage which reckes not of the chances of war.

There were 400,000 British troops massed in two great armies of similar proportions on both sides of the Seine, in the pastoral valleys between Yvetot and Rouen.

Taught prudence by their previous experiences, the French commanders resolved that their next blow should be a deci-

sive one. For a wonder, therefore, their national vanity was subordinated to the rigid necessities of the moment, and, beyond some trivial outpost affairs, no engagement was risked with the invaders until they had assembled such overwhelming forces that, under the ordinary conditions of warfare, they must succeed in hopelessly crushing the two sections of the British army.

On the north bank of the Seine General Saussier contemplated, with the conscious pride of superiority, a superb army of 500,000 men, whilst, on the south, General Mercier commanded a well-equipped force of 450,000.

France had strained every nerve to place these phenomenal numbers rapidly in the field.

All bridges across the river had been blown up to a point far below Yvetot; junction between the different portions of Lord Roberts's troops was rendered apparently impossible without retreat or delay.

The former course meant a moral victory for the French; the latter they resolved to render impossible by delivering a concerted attack at dawn on June 2d.

Like Trochu during the siege of Paris, General Saussier had his plan; like von Moltke, on the same memorable occasion, Lord Roberts also had a scheme, and it differed materially from that of Saussier.

During the afternoon of June 1st thirty-eight stout barges were towed up the Seine from a point below Yvetot, where willing hands had for some days past been engaged in fitting substantial level platforms upon them at a uniform height of six feet from the water.

Between the two wings of the British army nineteen roads led to the river, and at ten o'clock that night there were nineteen substantial floating bridges spanning the stream in each locality where a crossing was practicable.

About the same hour General Massy, who now controlled the operations on the south side of the river, pushed some 10,000 men close up to the French lines—"Just to keep

them awake," he explained to his staff—and whilst the French generalissimo marvelled at the audacity of the English in anticipating the attack of the morrow, 190,000 of the said English were quietly taking up the positions allotted to them on the extensive lines of the northern force.

Shortly before dawn the 10,000, who had made things exceedingly lively for the French in the dark, rapidly withdrew, and when General Saussier was calmly drinking his morning coffee and glancing over the final arrangements for the attack, to commence at 5.30 a.m., it being then four o'clock, the actual disposition of his adversary was as follows :

Three miles in front of his position were 350,000 Britons. General Massy, with 50,000 men, was intrusted with the comparatively easy task of holding the river flank, whilst the barges, having served their purpose, were drawn up on the British bank of the stream, and, by prior efficiency of design, now formed thirty-eight excellent floating forts in the most exposed localities.

General Saussier did not know of these unexpected events, nor did he know, as he asked for a second cup, that at that precise moment, the British were advancing to attack *him*.

Lord Roberts resolved, from the outset, to risk annihilation for the sake of complete success.

A partial or merely strategic victory would be as bad as a defeat.

The superior French army lay crescent-shape in front and almost overlapping him. He therefore sent the whole of his guns and cavalry to the extreme left with orders to irresistibly pound the French right until it was driven in upon the centre. He split up his forces into six divisions of ten brigades, and in each brigade there were 5000 men. He personally kept at his immediate disposal eight additional brigades as a reserve.

Divisional commanders and brigadiers received the most precise instructions that they must each fight on his own

line of advance without reference to proceedings elsewhere, and the only deviation from this definite scheme would occur when the French right was obviously driven in, and concentration towards the Rouen road and the Seine should be aimed at.

In a simple phrase, the battle was fought as though the British troops were travelling along the radii of a fan, of which the French constituted the outer circumference. As the fight progressed the fan commenced to contract.

General Saussier finished his second cup of coffee that night in Paris.

He was about to complete his early breakfast when the sound of firing, rapidly growing in volume over a wide segment of the French front, startled him exceedingly.

A staff officer exclaimed : " 'This is an attack in force.' "

" Impossible ! " shouted the general. " 'They have impudence the most sublime, but surely not such as this.' "

An aide-de-camp rode madly up to the house occupied by the Commander-in-Chief.

" My General," he cried, " the English have driven in the pickets, and the whole army is threatened. "

" It is unbelievable ! " roared the astonished Frenchman, rushing towards his charger. " Fly," he continued, addressing his staff, " to order a general advance, and telephone to Mercier to offer battle at once. We must drive these imbeciles into the sea forthwith. "

There could now be no doubt concerning the nature and magnitude of the engagement.

Along a front of seven miles, a determined conflict was already in progress, and the mad fury of the combat rent the air with its din, whilst affrighted birds mingled their cries with the screaming of shells and the whistling of bullets.

The French guns were caught in a most disadvantageous position, being massed in rear of the centre, and the fierce and wholly unexpected onslaught of the British momentarily drove back the French line, and hampered the exertions of the artillery.

At last General Saussier ordered ten batteries to the front, to stop the British advance at all hazards.

Miscalculating the position of his opponents, the French artillery officer intrusted with the movement actually galloped his guns into the fighting line of a brigade composed of the London Scottish, the Queen's Westminsters, the Artists' Corps, and the Inns of Court Volunteers, strengthened by a battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

"Bayonet the gunners, Westminsters!" shouted Colonel Sir Howard Vincent, as he perceived the endeavours of the French to wheel rapidly and extricate themselves.

"Shoot the horses, 23d," yelled Colonel Blyth, who knew the most effective method of throwing guns out of action.

This combination of effort soon achieved its purpose. The French artillerymen fought like men possessed, for the gunner in all lands cares not for life when his beloved weapon is in danger. It was the first experience of the Volunteers in the dread realities of war, but they took up the points of the situation like puppies lapping new milk. They absolutely climbed over men, guns, and horses, and it seemed as though, in a fit of Gargantuan rage, they desired to pound the lot into fragments, until their officers hastily persuaded them to form up in column again.

Not a moment too soon was order restored.

Even the brief diversion created by the mad exploit of the artillery enabled the commander of the French centre to rally his disgusted but unbeaten troops. In the small town of Les Petits Osiers, a congeries of narrow streets and lanes, he took his stand, and when the British brigade resumed its advance, it was met by a murderous and well-sustained fire from a vastly superior force.

For a little while the Brigadier, Colonel Blyth, made his men lie down until he sent to Major-General James Alleyne, who was in charge of the division, for reinforcements.

But every brigade was hotly engaged, and relief was impossible.

Colonel Blyth hesitated no longer. Whatever the result to himself and his men, the French must be driven out of Les Petits Osiers. Calmly trotting his horse into the bullet-swept zone in front of his men, he shouted, pointing to the town with his sword, "Now, who leads?"

Few could hear him owing to the noise of the firing, but all understood his action. Every man sprang to his feet, and a race ensued between the different regiments as to which should be first to close with the enemy.

Alas, many fell by the way. Of that fine brigade it was afterwards computed that 400 men were lost during that frightful onrush.

But heroism such as this was not to be denied, and in a few minutes they were at close quarters with the French. The latter, nothing loth, sought to engulf them in a sea of lead and steel, and in a few minutes the entire brigade must have been annihilated had not help arrived.

Lord Roberts, at first anxiously noting the progress of the fight from the tower of an ancient church, was assured by about 5.30 a.m. that all was well on both wings. He descended, therefore, and moved up the reserve division to strengthen the centre attack where he counted upon the most stubborn resistance.

Among the troops under his direct command was a splendid brigade of 6000 men, composed exclusively of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Unequaled throughout the world for physique and steadiness on parade, these stalwart troops were much more at home in active service than when engaged in their ordinary duties, and there had been no little grumbling among the men when they were not selected to take part in the first attack. But, unknown to themselves, fate had reserved for them a predominant share in determining the fortunes of the day.

Perceiving with quick glance the momentary check of Colonel Blyth's force, and intuitively realising the difficul-

ties against which he was contending, Lord Roberts now dispatched the Royal Irish Constabulary to his assistance.

At the precise moment when the Fusiliers and the London Corps were seemingly swallowed up by overwhelming odds of fresh troops, the Irish Military Police dashed at the double into the town and set about the congenial and oft-practised task of clearing the streets.

Now, street-fighting is an art in itself, and the French soon found that Ireland had developed the pastime to a pitch of excellence never dreamed of on the Continent. Whether using bullet, bayonet, or butt-end of a rifle, the Irish policeman was an expert of the first quality, and the small, if active, Frenchman was no match for the genial giant who proceeded to mercilessly instruct him in the science of an election fight.

In ten minutes there were over a thousand French soldiers stretched, killed or badly injured, on the paving stones of Les Petits Osiers, and the rest were swept into the open country at the rear, as though a tornado had struck them.

"Faith," cried a pleasant-looking leviathan, wiping the blood from a cut across his forehead when a moment's halt was possible, "that reminds me of nothin' in the world so much as like a Cork dimonstration."

"It 's a thrue word you spake, O'Reilly," said the man whom he addressed. "'Th' only difference is that a Cork mob would n't have quit so aisy."

Lord Roberts, informed by signals from the church tower that the artillery and cavalry had driven in the French right, and that the extreme British left was already beginning to swing round, made up his mind at this moment to strike a tremendous blow at the discomfited enemy.

Rouen was but three miles distant.

He had determined to attack the city next day with a portion of his forces, but the remarkable rapidity with which the huge French force had melted away before the ardour of his

men, suggested the possibility of capturing the place forthwith, when organised resistance was least probable.

Hastily explaining his design to Alleyne, with whose division he united the entire reserve, he sent off several aides to secure the co-operation of the mounted arms, which, by-the-way, were led by Lieut.-General Sir Drury Lowe.

Some further minor details were arranged with lucidity and dispatch, with the result that by 9.30 a.m. a fresh set of ideas were in full operation, having for their object the capture of Rouen itself.

Alleyne's division marched in two columns along parallel roads straight for the gate known as the *Porte de Havre*, and the cavalry and guns were instructed to press hard for the same point, eleven o'clock being the hour fixed for the combination of the attack.

The flying French were by this time seized with absolute panic.

To their excitable nature it seemed as though fate forbade that they should prevail against the British. General Sausier, after in vain risking his life repeatedly in the effort to stem the tide of disaster, had been forced by his staff to desist.

He hurriedly gave his second in command orders to defend the town at all hazards until Mercier could come to his assistance, and then resolved to proceed by special train to Paris.

In view of the inflammable condition of that fickle city, this resolution was a wise one. He was the head of the army, and it was far better that the Government should be made aware of the magnitude of the disaster by himself than by the necessarily more unconvincing means of a dispatch.

Sir Drury Lowe was vigorously shelling the retreating force with shrapnel—his cavalry delivering charge after charge in the successful endeavour to more hopelessly crowd the French into the centre—when news of Lord Roberts's fresh design reached him.

By a masterly stroke of genius he at once changed his tactics.

Hastily massing his cavalry, he caused them to charge into the scattered but still numerous foe for a distance of about 800 yards. The division was then to wheel to right and left, thus opening up a clear path for the guns which followed in their track, and enabling them to decimate their opponents from the closer range.

This terribly effective manœuvre was repeated again and again, and the French losses during the next hour were simply colossal.

There was no time to think of any other consideration but the one object in view. The claims of humanity were necessarily thrown to the winds. Gunners and horsemen individually were but insignificant portions of this awful engine of death and destruction.

The French general intrusted with the defence of Rouen, to which not a thought had been given prior to the battle, was madly urging his horse along a crowded and hopelessly encumbered road when he was struck mortally by a section of a shell.

He was captured by a dragoon, without the slightest attempt at rescue by the frenzied and heedless mob of soldiers, whose desperate rage was now centred upon one consideration only—the desire to save their lives.

There were many opportunities when, had they rallied in the slightest degree, they must have hindered if not wholly stopped the murderous attacks of the British guns and cavalry.

Fewer men would, indeed, have been lost in attempting such a deed, than in the blind fury of the flight. But arms, ammunition, knapsacks, belts, even coats and headgear, had been thrown aside, and the human torrents poured on, they knew not how or whither.

Many died from sheer exhaustion, some went mad and

danced and sang wild snatches of familiar ballads—whenever there was an obstacle in front lifelong comrades tore savagely at each other to gain another place towards safety.

When the Lincolnshire regiment reached the outer line of fortifications it was hard to distinguish them from the dishevelled crowd of fugitives pouring into the city.

The *sous-officier* in charge of the guard did, it is true, realise what was happening, and strove to close the iron doors and raise the drawbridge.

He was promptly seized, and almost wrenched limb from limb by those of his own countrymen who would have been shut out by his action.

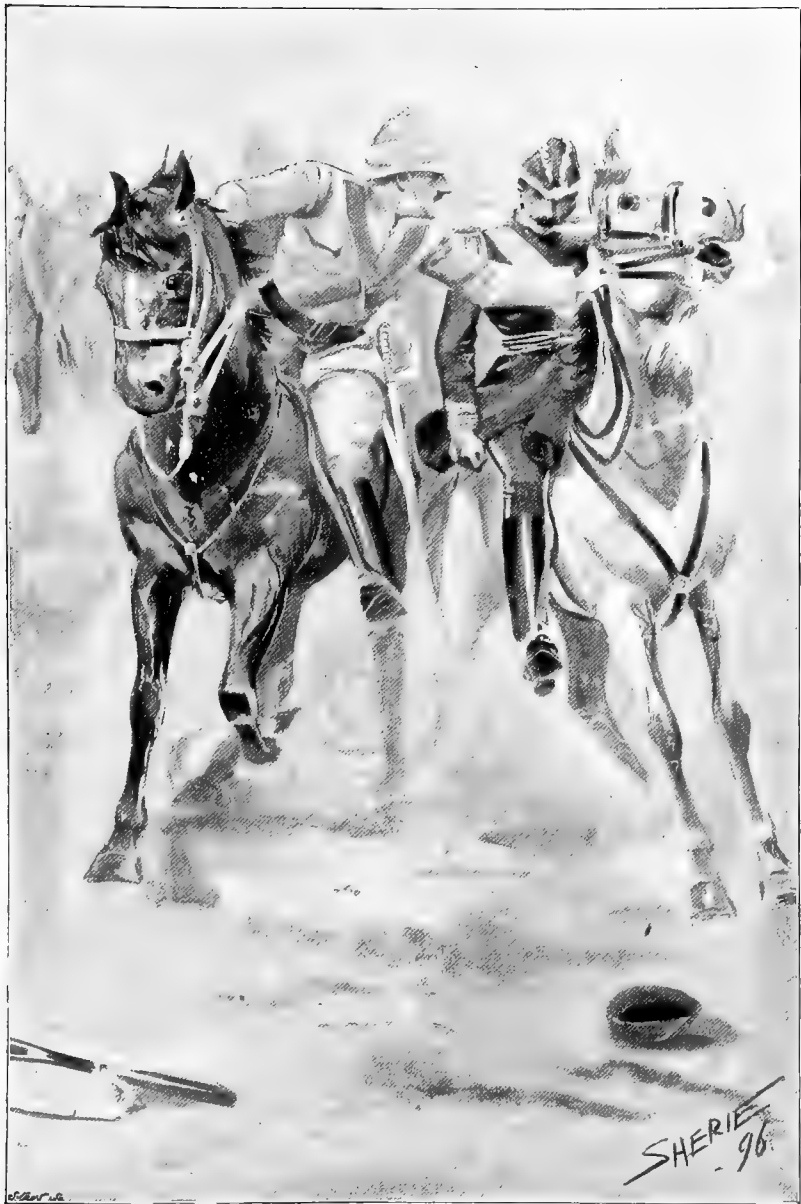
So well had the attack been timed that Lowe's cavalry and Alleyne's infantry entered the town together. The two British commanders rode into the Grande Place almost at the same moment. Of organised resistance there was practically none, but the stern necessity of war rendered it imperative that the ghastly slaughter should continue, for even yet a moment's breathing time given to the enemy might mean the complete failure of the bold movement.

One portion of a battery had managed to struggle up thus early—four guns of D Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery—and Major Eustace was ordered to at once open fire along the broad straight boulevards. He rapidly placed his guns in position. In a few seconds the shrapnel would have gone shrieking down the thoroughfare into the mass of fugitives, now, unfortunately, containing women and children as well as panic-stricken men, when a gentleman in plain clothes, bearing a white handkerchief tied to a walking-stick, ran through the main entrance of the Hôtel de Ville, and bravely advanced up the street in the very face of the guns.

General Sir Drury Lowe rode forward to meet him.

It was the Mayor of the city, and he took it upon himself, in the absence of any proper military authority, to yield unconditionally.

.



"HE WAS CAPTURED BY A DRAGOON."

Early that morning General Mercier had advanced with a splendid display of horse, foot, and artillery, to sweep the English out of France on the south side of the Seine.

He quickly discovered that he was fighting the air, and the flanking parties on the right also found to their cost that the Seine was held in force. Shortly afterwards the telephone from General Saussier's headquarters informed him of the fierce attack made by the British, and he continued to receive conflicting messages until all communications suddenly ceased.

As a matter of fact, any further information must have been conveyed in a strong Irish brogue, as the Royal Irish Constabulary had just entered the building.

Mercier, of course, wasted both men and temper in a useless duel with the well-posted and considerable army corps under Massy's command. At last came definite tidings. Saussier was irremediably beaten and Rouen was occupied.

The French General vowed, in all manner of strange expletives, that the English should yet be worsted, and he forthwith put into operation the most brilliantly-conceived and deadly tactical movement which Lord Roberts had so far been called upon to face.

He valiantly set out to march to the estuary of the Seine, with the intention of crossing the river by hook or by crook, and recapturing Havre, thus imperilling the British base and totally destroying their lines of communication for supplies and reinforcements.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MERCIER'S MISTAKE.

GENERAL MASSY kept keen watch and ward at his post on the north bank of the Seine. By midday he became aware that the vast French army beyond the river was engaged in some definite move, but he could not discover its purport.

A captive balloon which he sent up for the purpose of finding out the direction taken by the enemy was destroyed by a shell filled with an explosive specially designed to cover an immense area. These missiles were in possession of both forces, and ballooning was, early in the campaign, rendered practically impossible by this means.

Foiled in his endeavour, and knowing well the futility of dispatching scouts across the river to ascertain the line of march of such an immense host as that commanded by General Mercier, the Englishman adopted the last resource of the modern philosopher—he lit a cigar, and proceeded to calmly reason out the situation, choosing Major Harington for his confidant, as the latter happened to be near him.

“Mercier has three courses open to him,” he said reflectively. “He can attempt to recapture Rouen, in which case the chief will know about his intention before I do. If he is wise, he will retreat to Le Mans, and compel us to follow him before we advance on Paris. In this case we can do nothing to-day or to-morrow, and by the time we are ready for an advance we will have learnt his position. His third course—and, by Jove, I hope he won’t take it—is to advance towards Havre and try to cut into our lines of communication.”

"Well, sir," said Harington, "it seems to me that the last alternative is the only one to guard against immediately. There is a gunboat about five miles down the river. Shall I ride there, get ferried across, and see if I can find out where the heads of his columns are?"

"The very thing," cried the General. "Is your horse fresh enough?"

"He has done nothing but eat all the morning."

"Off you go, then. Take a small escort with you in case of accident. Report to me here, if possible, between three and four o'clock."

Harington chose a sergeant and six troopers of the Queen's Bays to accompany him, and the party rode away at a sharp trot.

They soon found the tiny warship, and the Commander lowered a boat to row them across, the horses swimming whilst the men held the bridles.

Once on the other side they struck straight into the country and made for the highest point in the vicinity, some two miles distant. There was neither desire nor necessity for caution. Speed was the chief requirement, and there were no hostile vedettes to be seen.

By 1.30 p.m. they were breasting the hill from the westward, and on nearing its summit Harington and the sergeant dismounted so as to reach the crest without showing against the skyline.

Both men whistled softly to express their amazement as they saw the entire French force heading towards the coast in dense masses, with a vast commissariat in the rear, and a cloud of cavalry rapidly advancing towards the place where they were standing concealed by some brushwood.

Harington waited a few minutes to take accurate note of the enemy's disposition. Then the Sergeant exclaimed anxiously: "If we don't hurry, sir, they'll see us."

"You are right," said the Major. "It will certainly be better that we should not be noticed."

They rode at a breakneck pace down the hill and were soon hidden by the trees on the road at its base. Once there, Harington told the non-commissioned officer to keep in touch with the enemy's whereabouts so far as he could, and whenever there was anything definite to communicate to send one of his party to the river with orders to cross by some means and give his information to the nearest officer, with a request to forward it immediately to Lord Roberts and General Massy.

It was not three o'clock when Harington dashed up to the divisional headquarters, covered with dust, and his charger steaming from the combined effects of the double bath and a fast gallop.

"Take one of my spare horses," cried the General on hearing the news, "and go to the Commander-in-Chief. I have just heard he is at Rouen. It is four miles and a good road."

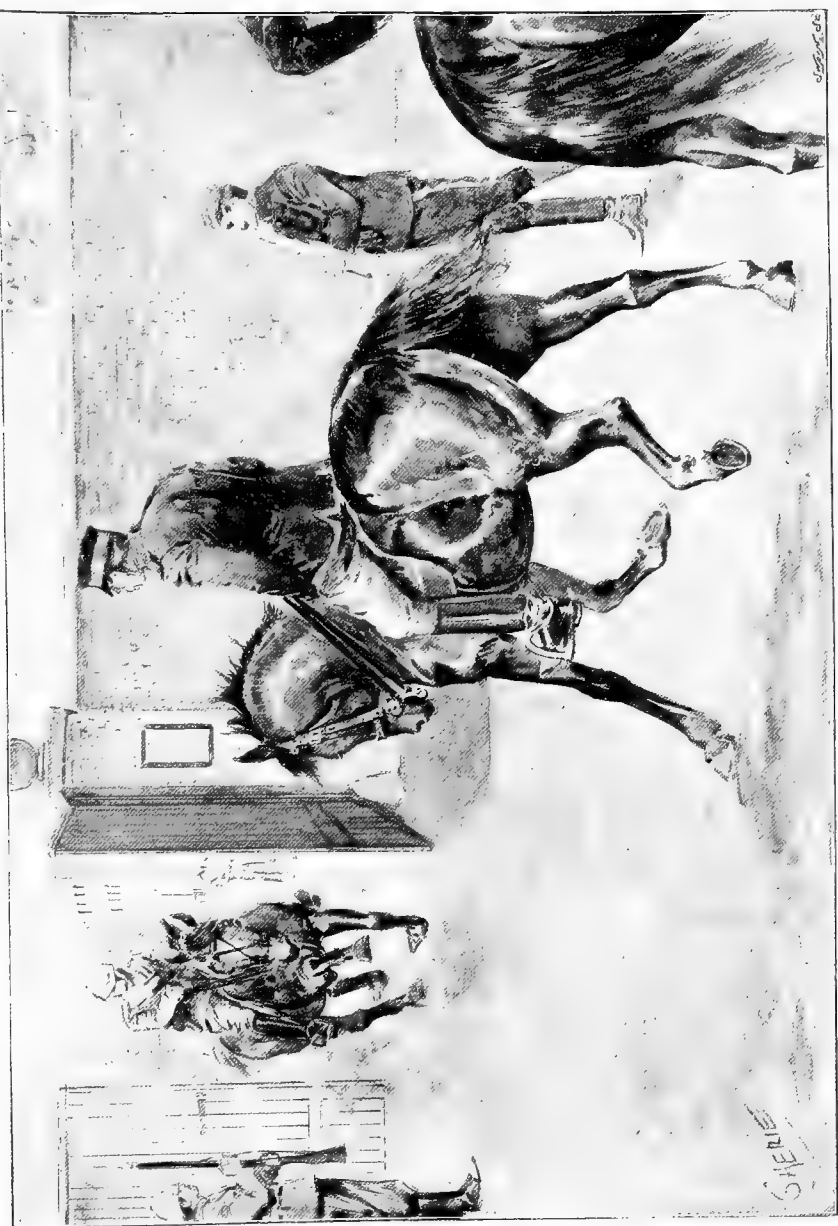
Harington was desperately hungry, but he did not dare to suggest a moment's pause lest some other staff officer should be selected for this important mission.

Declining the offer of a fresh mount, he set off again at a good hunting pace, and in half-an-hour he was clattering over the paving-stones of Rouen to the Hôtel de Ville, where he found Lord Roberts seated in the vestibule, with the Duke of York and several divisional commanders, partaking of a hasty meal.

His lordship listened to the recital in silence, only interjecting a question as to the probable number of Mercier's guns.

Harington's diplomatic experiences now stood him in good stead, else he would have been slightly nervous. As it was, he spoke quite collectedly, and evidently impressed the distinguished soldiers present by his lucidity and powers of observation. His final arrangements for obtaining further news by means of the dragoons elicited a nod and a smile from the Chief, but as he concluded a deep silence fell upon the company.

Every man present felt that the situation was one of



"IT WAS NOT THREE O'CLOCK WHEN HARINGTON DASHED UP TO HEADQUARTERS."

unusual gravity, and they all waited until Lord Roberts should express his views.

After a marked pause the hero of Kandahar, who had been scrutinising the marks left on his boots by the stirrup-leathers, suddenly looked at Harington and said: "When did you last have anything to eat?"

This wholly unexpected query went straight to the youngster's soul, for his eyes had unconsciously travelled towards some meat pies and sandwiches on the table. He blushed furiously beneath his outer crust of perspiration and dust as he stammered: "At five o'clock this morning, sir."

"I thought so," said Lord Roberts. "Sit down and have a snack. Don't hurry. Orderly, bring some more bottled beer."

Teddy required no second invitation. His youthful appetite was simply ravenous, and a lot of men would give pounds for the thirst which he slaked with a first long draught of honest English beer.

Lord Roberts was discussing Mercier's move with the Duke of York and the other generals present when a cavalry orderly drew up outside, and a moment later the sentry at the door announced "a letter from General Massy for Major Harington."

Everyone, Harington included, imagined that some fresh incident bearing upon the French tactics had happened, and the common thought was that it was curious the information had not been sent direct to the Commander-in-Chief. The moment that Teddy glanced at the envelope he saw, to his bewilderment, that the handwriting was Irene's, and the cover bore the unmistakable London postmark.

Shortly after his departure Massy had received the post-bag, and, finding this letter, thought it would be a kindly thing to send it on to Harington—or it might not reach him for hours. But now the young officer was utterly at a loss to explain the occurrence, and the entire party were looking at him, eagerly awaiting the expected intelligence.

"Come, Major Harington, why don't you open it and

learn what 's the latest development ? ” said Lord Roberts, for Teddy had laid the note on the table.

Harington answered with the calmness of despair: “ It 's not from General Massy, sir.”

“ Then who on earth is it from ? ” was the Chief's very natural question.

“ From a lady, sir.” Teddy positively glowed.

Not a man in the room except Harington but laughed heartily at this unlooked-for explanation.

“ From a lady ! ” repeated Lord Roberts, with affected astonishment. “ Do you mean to say that, in addition to your other active duties, you find time for affairs of the heart ? ”

If he did not wish to appear for ever ridiculous, Teddy knew that he must now tell the complete truth.

“ It is from my *fiancée*, sir,” he said, “ Lady Irene Vyne, and I presume it came to hand shortly after I started to find your lordship, so General Massy was good enough to send it after me.”

“ Ah,” said the Commander-in-Chief, “ you are a lucky fellow. You get your rewards quickly. Please ask me to the wedding. Meanwhile, you are transferred to my staff. I will explain to General Massy. You had better send a note back with the orderly, directing your servant to bring your baggage to the Hôtel des Bains, Havre. We go there by train within an hour.”

What talisman was there in Irene that she was so constantly associated with her lover's good fortune ? It was the memory of her words that impelled him to the brave deed which won him promotion and the Victoria Cross. And now that fortune had again sought him—for it was no small thing to be thus pitchforked into the headquarters staff—her sweet personality became interwoven with his fate at the precise moment the fickle goddess had smiled upon him. No wonder he furtively kissed the note before he stowed it away beneath the left lappel of his field tunic.

His scattered senses returned as he heard Lord Roberts say: "Mercier has done the best possible thing to help us. By retreating on Le Mans he would have forced us to pursue him. An advance on Paris must be regarded as suicidal with such an enemy on our flank. As it is, Massy's division and the fleet can hold him in check until our men have had a night's rest, and are fit to cross the Seine in pursuit. Be good enough, gentlemen, to see to it that an abundance of rations be issued, and that none but the most necessary duties be performed. We are quite safe from attack. Divisions will commence to cross the river to-morrow at 7 a.m. I will return from Havre about that hour. You, Alleyne, will make all arrangements for holding Rouen, and a strong corps of observation should be pushed forward five or six miles along the Paris road to-night."

A little later the assembly broke up, and after Harington had seen to the care of his gallant charger, he was ready to attend the Commander-in-Chief and the Duke of York on their way to Havre.

Here they met Lord Charles Beresford. Telegrams from the front announced that two of Harington's scouts had recrossed the Seine to bring tidings of the steady advance of Mercier's corps, and the latest news showed that the French were in bivouac for the night at a point nearly opposite Yvetot.

At noon on June 3d, over 250,000 British troops were so posted as to cut off General Mercier's line of retreat towards Le Mans, and at six o'clock the same evening Lord Charles Beresford, who, conjointly with the Duke of York, was intrusted with the defence of Havre, was informed of the French advance through the woods opposite Caudebec.

Each vessel in the fleet had sent half her crew and all her boats to the river, and when darkness shrouded the landscape in gloom, there was not a yard of water unpatrolled for a distance of nearly eight miles,

Mercier laid his plans well. Strong rafts were hastily knocked together and carried to the banks on gun carriages. At midnight a combined attempt was made to effect a crossing, and thenceforth a series of murderous affrays commenced between the sailors and the French. It was during those few terrible hours before dawn that the British navy suffered greater loss in men than resulted from any other engagement throughout the war.

Every combat was a personal one. Small parties of equal strength and determined courage attacked each other resolutely, and the swift current of the Seine carried out to sea many a ghastly token of the fury of the fight.

But daylight came at last and the weary sailors were able to leave the task of defence to Massy's division, which had now arrived.

Not a Frenchman had reached the opposite shore alive, and Mercier had lost a great number of men and even more valuable time in a fruitless enterprise.

Furious with rage, he brought up all his artillery and commenced to shell the opposing heights. But the fleet soon took a strong hand in this game. When the tide permitted, the gunboats and light cruisers stood into the estuary of the Seine and effectually engaged the French artillery, whilst the heavier ships threw shells far inland amongst the thick clusters of troops, who were compelled to stand galled and inactive beneath this fresh infliction.

And so the day wore, amidst wild galloping of the French staff and objectless movements of divisions and ceaseless attempts, ever becoming more faint-hearted, to cross the river.

As night came on the French leader received unmistakable tidings of Lord Roberts's advance. The pursuing army was now only four hours distant, and, to cap all else, a colossal mistake by the transport had resulted in a scarcity of ammunition for the Lebel rifle.

Provision had only been made for two days' operations, and the reserve was in Rouen !

Summoning his divisional commanders, Mercier told them the exact position of affairs. He concluded by announcing that if they failed to reach the north side of the river at the next attempt, there was nothing left but to capitulate.

Nerved by his words, his subordinates swore that they would succeed, and every preparation was made for a tremendous effort on the lines adopted during the previous night.

British audacity, however, supplied another solution to the problem which distracted the French Commander-in-Chief and his staff. At ten o'clock Alleyne led his division across the river. Without a moment's hesitation he forced in the French vedettes and delivered a strong assault upon the enemy's position. In the darkness the numbers of the French were of little avail. The fighting was mostly between regiments and brigades ; with energetic purpose on the one side, and irresolute uncertainty on the other.

An hour later Lord Roberts's first division surprised the French rear, and when dawn broke over the scattered combatants, his second division had outflanked the enemy on the south-west.

The rapidly growing light showed the British position to be a very favourable one. Even under equal conditions they would probably have beaten the French after a severe fight. Lord Roberts knew that his opponents must be dispirited, but he did not know that they were practically disarmed.

He realised that the crucial point in the campaign had now been reached, and the severe physical and mental strain under which he had lived for many weeks, and especially during the past three days, rendered him haggard and pallid in the extreme.

But the indomitable spirit of the great soldier who is so loved by the rank and file of the British army sustained him even in this desperate moment, when the fortunes of England apparently trembled in the balance.

He proceeded quietly, if somewhat slowly, to give the nec-

essary directions for a combined attack by all arms, but suddenly Harington cried: "An officer with a small escort is riding towards us with a flag of truce!"

The Commander-in-Chief's iron nerve did not desert him at this momentous intelligence. He examined the party carefully through his glasses before he said: "What is the meaning of it, I wonder?"

The French envoy was soon before him. Saluting respectfully, he said: "My name is General Fôret, and I am commissioned by the Commander-in-Chief to arrange terms of capitulation and thus prevent useless bloodshed."

"The only terms I can offer," replied Lord Roberts, "are those of unconditional surrender."

The Frenchman looked the Englishman squarely in the face ere he strove to utter a protest. But he saw that argument was useless with this slight stern Briton who gazed at him so resolutely with his steel-blue eyes.

Yet he clung to his mission to the last. "Surely," he went on, "in view of our superior numbers, and taking into consideration the fact that unfortunate circumstances alone prevent us from offering battle, in which case—I say it with all esteem for yourself and your brave troops—we would probably beat you, you should grant the officers liberty on parole and disband the army corps."

"It is impossible, sir," replied his lordship. "The conditions under which this war is fought do not permit of such terms being accorded. Do you refuse? I am about to order the advance."

General Fôret hesitated a moment before he uttered the fateful words: "My orders are to yield, unconditionally or otherwise." Then, as if to excuse himself, he cried, with tears of anger in his eyes: "France is ruined by her own acts. Our men are armed with empty rifles!"

The "Cease Fire" was sounded, and before night fell arrangements were in progress for the speedy transportation to England of this host of prisoners of war.

France had now lost over a million of her best troops.

When the tidings flew to Paris there was talk of barricades in the Faubourg St. Martin, and M. Hanotaux ground his teeth with fury as General Gourko, the Russian military representative on the Allies' Council, brought him the news of Alikhanoff's descent upon India.

"May he be blighted!" shrieked the French statesman, "and may Russia be torn to shreds. France has never had a day's good fortune since she patted the bear instead of whipping him!"

Gourko did not remonstrate. It is ill to quarrel with a man who is admirably playing your game.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ACROSS AMERICA IN SIXTY HOURS.

A CHANGE indeed had swept over popular sentiment in America.

All those little outbursts of irritation, those fretful taunts at the mother country, those frail manifestations of national hatred, of which so much had been made in the past, showed themselves to be superficial and unreal. In part, these had been evoked by the calm assumption of superiority by Englishmen who travelled in the dominions of America; in part, too, the stern mastership of England, strong in her centuries of honourable growth, and resting on foundations set long back upon the elements of national character, was galling to the younger country. And, in lesser degree, these excitations were but the signs of increasing strength—the “growing pains” of a great nation.

But deep below such fitful and transient moods there remained in the heart of the United States a strong abiding love for the old country. No one who knew America doubted her constancy.

Wayward, impulsive, she might deceive herself in days of calm and prosperity. But it needed only the presence of danger, the loud, imperious call of kinship, for her to cast off her indifference and reveal herself as she is, the western branch of the great Saxon race, the other England, one with Britain in blood, in history, in language, in feeling, in character, in destiny.

This was what had occurred.

As from day to day came news of repeated dangers threat-

ening England, American opinion became restive. The Jingo party in the Senate mourned to find their speeches no longer applauded. Horror of horrors, even the great name of Monroe, though interjected skilfully where enthusiasm was most wanted, fell cold and dead upon an ungrateful people.

“Great Scott !” exclaimed one patriot, “it’s mortal slow at Washington with nothing but Monroe, Monroe, Monroe, morning, noon, and night. If these blamed pulpit-slappers imagine that the whole American nation is going to exist for ever on Monroe, they’ll find themselves darned well mistaken. It’s about time for a change of menoo !”

And they soon had a change of “menoo.”

The growing excitement in the country, finding an outlet in demonstrations and public meetings, gradually spread to the great American journals, and began to sway the opinions of Congress. And when it was whispered that Russia had joined the allies, and would attack the defenceless shores of the great home of the Saxon race, there swept through the States a convulsive shock which rocked the very throne of government, and threatened to tumble down President, Cabinet, and party in disastrous and utter collapse.

The Democrats sought for a brief moment to stay the storm and pacify the tumult of public opinion.

At a meeting of Congress, the Government spokesman hurled forth anew the mystic name of Monroe, and bade his fellows remember their duty to the doctrine of neutrality on which American polity was based.

It was at this point that Jeremiah P. Sloker, of Wilmington, Pa., achieved undying fame.

Springing to his feet, he rushed into a wild and turbulent speech, passionate with sympathetic feeling for England, and then in a vehement peroration he declared:

“Mr. Speaker, we have heard too much of the Monroe Doctrine. [Loud cheers.] Are we such hoodoos that we have only one string to play on, and like a superannuated

fiddler ding away at it till everyone's distracted? Who was Monroe? An excellent gentleman who made a very sound remark. We appreciated his remark, and we treasured it up. But I guess he's dead. It's high time to dandle a fresh baby in the face of Europe. It is quite as easy to make a new doctrine which will have just as much authority. *I*, sir, am, I trust, an excellent gentleman. And *I* will make a very sound remark [laughter and cheers]. And you may call it, if you like, the Jeremiah P. Sloker Doctrine. And this is what my doctrine is. It is our duty, sir, to remember the claims of kindred, to succour our brethren, to assist those hard pressed in unjust war, to fight for truth and liberty. We must side with those of our blood who call upon us for our help and ask us to renounce our selfish, indolent, and impious inactivity. [Loud cheers.]

"There, gentlemen," continued the orator, turning round suddenly to the House, "that is the Jeremiah P. Sloker Doctrine, and I'll back it against Monroe's as I would a lively infant against a mummy." [Loud cheers.]

This extraordinary speech acted like a spark on gunpowder. The whole House, save for a small knot of Ministerialists, was enthusiastic. The real inward feeling of the American nation prevailed. Two days later the President was constrained to declare war.

In that one act all his former errors were forgiven and forgotten. No Minister had ever had the opportunity of doing so popular a deed. The silence and indifference with which he was received in Washington during the weeks of inactivity changed to enthusiastic ovation and scenes of wild excitement. The whole country was inflamed with the fire of martial ardour.

For it was what America in her heart yearned for. To stand among the nations, no longer youthful, immature, undeveloped; no longer to be patronised as a land of promise; no longer the excitable, irresponsible country which older civilisations indulged with a smile; but as a strong

man, equal in power, in wealth, in wisdom to the oldest great peoples of the earth—this was what she had so ardently desired.

And now she had stepped forth, free from boyhood's privileges, a giant, into the arena, and was standing side by side with England—the ally and defender of the greatest country that the world had known.

At last would commence her real national history—the history of a people made one by suffering and by activity. For she could not look back upon her first melancholy war with England, still less on the ghastly struggle amongst her own sons, and regard these as the prouder epochs of her life. Civil war cannot make a people great. America longed for some such splendid struggle as this that was now before her, a struggle against all Europe, as the starting point of a new and glorious period in her history, as something which would give her character and solidity, and establish her place firmly amongst the nations.

Excitement grew keener still when the newspapers published a telegram of quite extraordinary novelty. Had such a message ever passed between two nations before? Thus it read:

“Queen Victoria desires through the President to thank the American people for their generous action. The cause of both nations must for ever be the same—to give to the earth freedom and abiding peace.”

From north to south, from east to west, the great centres of population throbbed with high resolve.

Throughout the marvellous changes of climate and soil and sky and country which make the vast continent so mysterious, there was the same eager animation, the same desire to swell the ranks of the newly-created army.

States hoary with civilisation, and States yet rugged with crude primitive life, vied with each other to send forth battalions.

Had the Americans had their own way, a volunteer army of five millions would have been raised in a week.

"Everyone 's helping," observed Hiram K. Thatcher, "and it 's deuced funny. Who ever saw our chief cities all singing the same tune before?"

"They each want to do their share," said someone to him.

"I guess so," was his reply. "And they 're well fitted to divide the business between them. Boston can do the thinking, Frisco the fighting, Chicago the feeding, and New York the paying!"

Even the Universities were aflame. A battalion of 1000 strong came from Harvard and Yale—fine, manly, well-exercised young men whom football and rowing had formed into superb specimens of their race.

The standing army was not large, but Americans speedily adapt themselves to military requirements, and General Smithson, who was in command, had no trouble in enlisting in Philadelphia and New York 100,000 men who were to form the first army organised for service in Germany. Owing to the vast distances in America and the delays rendered necessary by questions of outfit, the whole of these were drawn from the Eastern States lying within reasonable distance of the two ports of embarkation.

This was a blow to the City of the Golden Gate. The San Franciscan does not care to wait for his excitement. He wants it quick, and he swore loudly when he sniffed the battle from afar and found that he was left out.

It was sad, and sad beyond all others to Mr. William J. Ritchie, commonly called "Gu," on the authority of certain ingenious persons who translated his first name into Spanish. He was a gentleman in whom activity was almost a disease, and who was equally at home in a bluff at poker and in holding up a Mexican card-sharper. He was a familiar figure in most European capitals, and had the useful faculty of making his visits memorable by business deals which brought

himself many fortunes and left the older civilisations the better for some excellent lessons in commercial smartness. He was now enjoying the fruits of a season spent largely in Tattersall's, where he made himself dreaded for his luck and popular for his princely way of celebrating it.

And now, at first mention of a war, his restless spirit yearned for triumphs in a new sphere, for it was his firm conviction that operations on the Stock Exchange and Turf fitted a man admirably for strategic manœuvres in the tented field.

He read with joy the proclamation that any American who raised and fitted out a battalion of 800 men would receive a commission as its colonel, and in less than twenty-four hours he had gathered round him such a body of San Franciscans as was calculated by very appearance to excite apprehension in the German mind.

Now Colonel William J. Ritchie knew General Smithson, so he took care to wire him asking that he might be permitted to join the First Army Corps. General Smithson was a good friend, but he was also a wily soldier. He found he had no room for the gallant Colonel, for the first expedition was absolutely full. But he also knew that there were only three days and a half before the date of embarkation, and that his prompt consent would enable him to confer a favour of which Colonel "Gu" could not avail himself. Thus, duty and friendship seemed wondrously harmonious.

But herein the General overreached himself. He had not thoroughly estimated the resourcefulness of the Westerner.

Colonel Ritchie's heart gladdened when he received the telegram, and he was soon in deep conference with the railway officials. Shortly before lunch that day he calmly informed his friends at the club that he would have to leave them. He intended to join the First Army Corps for Europe.

They looked at him in amazement.

"My dear fellow," said one of them, "it's 3000 miles to New York."

"Three thousand odd," corrected the Colonel gravely.

"And you have three days and a half!"

"Yes," he admitted cheerfully. "A good margin for accidents."

"But, look here, old man," exclaimed another. "You must be jesting. The fastest train takes six days. And even if you could work miracles, what about your men and their uniforms, their arms, and accoutrements!"

"By Jove, yes," responded Ritchie reflectively. "Really, it's high time I saw to that. Ta, ta! It'll take me till lunch. Don't begin till I come back."

And he calmly left the room.

Unconcerned as were his movements he lost no time. He drove to the office of a well-known contractor, armed with a small portmanteau which he dumped down on the table.

"Say," he said, "I guess you are open to a deal. Now, I want 800 military outfits delivered complete in twenty-four hours, with all arms and accoutrements. Must n't be a moment late, or you fall flat. Can you do it, or must I go elsewhere?"

The contractor looked at him in a startled sort of way. But he knew his man.

"It's a bargain," he said. "I'll do it at two hundred dollars a head."

"Good!" exclaimed Colonel Ritchie. Then, opening his portmanteau, he discovered it full to the top with hundred dollar bills. He counted out 1600 of these with much solemnity, and as the other proceeded to check them he sat down and rapidly wrote a form of agreement.

When the contractor had perused this document he smiled. For he saw that his apparently nonchalant customer had added these words: "400 dollars to be forfeited for each and every fit-out unfinished." But he signed without a murmur. Colonel Ritchie got back as his friends had commenced on the soup. He sat down unconcernedly.

"That bit of business has cost me twenty-five cents," he complained.



' I GUESS YOU ARE OPEN TO A DEAL.'

"Twenty-five cents ! What do you mean ?"

"For a stamp : look at it." He carelessly tossed the paper across the table, and went on with his lunch.

He had left himself only two days and a half, or sixty hours, for the journey of 3000 miles across America. The feat looked impossible. But Ritchie regarded nothing as impossible. He calculated that by maintaining a uniform rate of fifty miles an hour he could just manage it.

The railway officials whom he interviewed were first amused, then amazed, then impressed by his proposal. When Ritchie drew out his cheque-book and began to figure out sums of money they were half won. When he spoke of patriotism they agreed to consider it. When he pointed out the tremendous advertisement they would get they were convinced.

Immense excitement was caused by the announcement of this extraordinary journey. The difficulties were stupendous.

But the companies were American and energetic. By telegraph, twenty engines, with cars complete, were stationed at equi-distant points along the road. Each set would run for 300 miles, and the passengers would then change cars during motion by the attachment of another engine and train, placed back to back. Every minute of delay was thus obviated, and the journey would be practically unbroken.

Could it be done ? That was what everyone asked, in particular the New York papers, and not least of all General Smithson.

On Tuesday the Colonel and his company entered the train with the 800 uniforms and accoutrements duly delivered, and left San Francisco amid ringing cheers, and the train dashed off on its wonderful journey.

Fortune favours the brave. The arrangements were perfect. At the same superb speed, aided where needed by additional engines, the train flew along, passing towns and cities and villages, across vast plains, up mountain

slopes, through verdant valleys. Everywhere along the line scattered groups of spectators assembled to gaze at the sudden apparition of the spectral train, which seemed to disappear as soon as it came in sight. And as it flew past there came to the occupants the sound of cheering. It was a journey unparalleled in railway annals.

Within, the troop had a good time. They were terribly crowded, but poker and revolver practice varied the tedium and difficulties of the way. Nor was there lack of drink and infinite smoke.

But the leader of the party was serious. He passed most of his leisure in walking from one engine to the other. Every time that the hour's run showed below fifty miles he offered the engineers fifty dollars to bring up the average in the next spin.

They invariably succeeded, but they burnt the fire-boxes out of fourteen engines.

At midnight on Thursday, the train drew up at the Central Station, New York. It had completed the journey in sixty hours exactly, and, without a moment's unnecessary delay, accompanied by a whole city of shouting and cheering admirers, the regiment marched through the streets to the quay-side. They were on time !

General Smithson smiled grimly when he saw them, for he had been compelled to charter an additional steamer.

"We must make room, I suppose, Colonel," he said to Ritchie. "And if we are a bit crowded by your men, at least I can say that there will always be space available in my army for such an officer as you !"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE FATHERLAND.

“ VASS iss dass ? ”

“ Dass iss von telegram from der Kaiser.”

They were not Germans, but New Yorkers, who spoke in this strange tongue, the lingo of the cheap clothes store in the vernacular of the American humourist. They stood on the deck of a transport which, out of sheer curiosity, had approached too near to the fleet under the command of Sir Nowell Salmon, at that moment engaged in the second and more serious bombardment of Tronning.

As a consequence, the alert gunners on the shore forts, knowing the damage they could effect by striking an unarmoured ship, had sent a range-finding six-inch shell screaming over the foremast, and in obedience to an imperative order from the Admiral the transport rapidly stood out to sea again.

But it was not for long that the combined armies of England and the United States were thus kept in a state of inaction.

Admiral Manan's ships, added to the tremendous array of British vessels which composed the three squadrons commanded by Sir Nowell Salmon, Admiral Dale, and Vice-Admiral Erskine, made up a flotilla against which even the strong fortifications guarding the western entrance to the Kiel Canal were of little avail.

For three long weeks the best troops of Germany, headed by their Emperor, had spent themselves in vain against the lines of Stralsund.

Sir Evelyn Wood had harassed them terribly. If they delivered an assault in force and retired after several hours of fierce but ineffective fighting, they were at once subjected to a bitter counter-attack by fresh troops hurried up by rail to some unexpected point.

When the German generals prepared a trap for this second instalment of the British plan of defence, it was either not forthcoming, or took the form of a feint which provoked and wearied the Germans.

It must be remembered that the country immediately behind Stralsund offers extraordinary difficulties to the effective manœuvring or concentration of troops, and there was no element of the impossible in a splendid British force being thus able to resist the whole of the armed strength of Germany.

The secret of Sir Evelyn Wood's success lay in the fact that the enemy could not get at him.

Truth to tell, the Kaiser Wilhelm behaved magnificently during this disastrous period. Untiring, undaunted, unostentatiously heroic, he inspired his soldiers by his presence and example. Where danger and difficulty were most intermixed the Emperor shared both with his men. The arrogance and petulance of his showman days were gone with the trivial considerations now perforce banished by the stress of the war. His really powerful nature was developed and broadened by adverse circumstances.

Unfortunately for his own happiness, he was still an actor, and what his histrionic ability had lost in naturalness it had gained in art. For the cheerful, self-denying, valiant Emperor, who had ever a pleasant word for all ranks, and a resolute bearing in the field, was secretly tortured by the knowledge that he had been led into a foolish and disastrous war.

The quiet tenacity of purpose displayed by England, coupled with her brilliant achievements during the earlier stages of the campaign, had opened his eyes to the realities

of the case. At first it was preposterous to suppose that Great Britain could stem the torrent that poured down upon her. But she did, and even pressed back the tide. Maddening as was the thought, it seemed that she might succeed from the outset against the fearful odds she was called upon to face. Now that the United States had joined her there was no longer speculation, but probability, nay, even certainty, of the allies being defeated.

His kingdom impoverished, his people torn by faction, his throne in danger, no wonder that the Emperor mourned in solitude or sought a glorious death at the head of his devoted troops.

But fate had better things in store for him. Great monarch as he was, his personality was a mere item in the strange sequence of events which this, the last of all wars among civilised nations, was destined to produce.

Thus it chanced that whilst his officers and men did not spare themselves in rescuing him from obvious peril, they were aided and abetted by no less a personage than the British Tommy. For the latter could not be taught to regard the Kaiser as other than a pronounced comedian. Every camp joke centred round him and his acts. No canteen song failed to have reference to him, and stories of his prowess and oddities were in all mouths.

So Tommy took care not to kill him. That is to say, whenever a battery had a clear chance of sending a shell at the Imperial staff, it was purposely directed elsewhere, and a corporal of the 1st Royals boasted during the rest of his days that he once spared the Emperor's life during a cavalry *mêlée*. "I could have given him No. 2 as clean as a whistle," he said, "but I did n't fancy having a smack at the Colonel, so I jabbed a Uhlan in the eye instead."

There was not the slightest doubt that, apart from the chances of war, the Emperor must have been killed or wounded by direct design of his opponents if they had so chosen.

An intolerable feeling of helplessness paralysed the German staff. It is easy, therefore, to understand that an absolute thrill of joy manifested itself when it became known that Tronning was occupied by a mixed force of English and Americans, under the command of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught. At last they would meet their adversary in the open.

Lord Wolseley had courteously offered the chiefship to General Smithson, but that sturdy veteran declined the honour.

"I allow that I am here to do my share in the fighting," he said modestly, "but the quarrel is yours, and your men must carry it through. I understand we are here to see that you don't get licked."

The Duke of Connaught had gained his proud position by sheer merit. His soldierly qualities were such that he must have risen to high rank in the army were he quite destitute of the accidental help of royal birth.

Whether in India or in Aldershot, his tactical skill was often manifested in divisional operations, and in Egypt he had seen something of the actualities of war under the distinguished general who was now intrusted with the supreme control of the British armies. So well was his worth known and appreciated by the people of England that everyone believed his selection to command the second German expedition to be a wise and unprejudiced one.

Moreover, he had accompanied Sir Evelyn Wood to Stralsund, and the practical value of his acquaintance with the arrangements then made soon bore fruit when he came to dispose his forces on shore.

It will simplify matters if the main idea of the subsequent operations be now briefly outlined.

The Duke's first business was to seize the Kiel Canal, and, with the aid of the fleet, to capture Kiel, the strong fortress which dominates the Baltic end of the water-way.

He was concurrently to concentrate his forces upon Neu-

minster, where three lines of railway, that from Heide on the north-west, Rendsburgh on the north, and Kiel on the north-east, converge.

His next forward movement would be towards Oldesloe, where he might expect to meet serious opposition, whilst to left and right of his front lay the fortified towns of Lübeck and Hamburg.

If he succeeded in breaking through this difficult barrier, Sir Evelyn Wood would forthwith advance upon Rostock, and thence strive to join the Duke of Connaught somewhere in the neighbourhood of Wittenberg on the Elbe, whence a combined effort could be made to reach Berlin.

In England much uneasiness was felt concerning the outcome of the new departure, and more than one speaker gave voice to this sentiment in the House of Commons.

Mr. Balfour silenced these doubters in a sentence.

"This war cannot end," he said with solemn emphasis, "until we have either occupied Paris, Berlin, and Moscow, or the rulers of our enemies have sought for peace upon terms to be dictated by us."

Thenceforth there was no questioning, but grim perseverance towards the yet distant goal.

At first the Duke of Connaught was much puzzled to know how to deal effectively with his curious allies. Personally accustomed to the rigid and punctilious methods of English military life, he was astounded at the seeming carelessness of detail that obtained among the United States volunteer troops; and he was not a little scandalised by the unwonted familiarity between officers and men.

But he was far too keen an observer to fail to note that beneath all this outward laxity there was an unfailing obedience, a strong sense of duty, and a readiness to make light of difficulties which went far to atone for the absence of certain formalities.

Anxious to meet their views to the utmost extent, he consulted General Smithson upon the matter,

"You just leave them to me, Prince," said the U. S. commander, with a quiet twinkle of mirth in his eye. "Send along an aide-de-camp or two to act with brigadiers when you want your ideas explained, but for goodness' sake tell the gentlemen in gold lace to leave things alone once they are in motion. My men do the thinking for themselves, and they 'll get cross if they 're expected to fight like machines. They 'll obey orders all right enough, but they must be left to carry them out in their own way."

"I assure, you, General Smithson," replied the Duke, "that it was furthest from my thoughts to dream of interfering in any way save to seek your full co-operation in my detailed scheme, of which you will always know the complete scope and purport. I was thinking rather of the commissariat and departmental arrangements."

"Nearly every man in the crowd has been accustomed to help himself since he was able to walk," said Smithson, indicating his vast army with a comprehensive sweep of his field-glasses. "If the eatables and ammunition are alongside, Prince, they 'll get 'em all right."

The Duke smiled genially and the conversation ended. He trusted to the future to elucidate all matters of which he was in doubt, and it did.

An effective column was constituted for the occupation of Neuminster. It consisted of 5000 British and 5000 American infantry, with a strong backing of guns and cavalry.

From Hamburg and Lübeck a somewhat similar German force had been thrown forward along the Ahrensbock line. Unknown to both parties, a race ensued for the possession of Neuminster, and of course the defenders won by some hours, as the resources of the country were fully at their service.

Viscount Falmouth commanded the little expedition, and with him, as the lawyers say, were Colonel Ritchie, in charge of the United States' troops, Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. G. H. Gough, of the 14th Hussars, with his own regiment,

and two regiments of volunteer cavalry, including the Middlesex Yeomanry, and Colonel Lockyer, R.A., with the guns.

The Germans speedily took advantage of their priority in time to place Neuminster in a state of defence. Field works were at once started on the north of the town, houses loop-holed, roads barricaded, and guns mounted in advantageous positions.

After a severe march across the level and sandy plains of the Schleswig-Holstein peninsula, the British advance guard met and drove back the German cavalry scouts, and Viscount Falmouth rode rapidly to the front to try and ascertain the enemy's disposition.

"They are strongly posted," said the Brigadier.

"I guess we 'll have trouble before we see the inside of the town from this end," said Ritchie.

Something in his voice caused Lord Falmouth to look at him.

"Don't you think we ought to deliver a direct attack?" he inquired.

"I think not," was the reply. "They 're expecting it right away, and they 'll raise us a hundred before the draw. All their preparations are made to meet us on this side, and I think it will pay to be a bit shy of coming in on their terms. Now, supposing the guns and horses were to stop here and keep all snug whilst we work round to the rear of the town, it will upset their pot. There can't be any shelter trenches on the south, and our German friends won't fight any better because they are cut off from any possible help."

"In other words," said Lord Falmouth, who knew the language of poker, "if we ante high enough, they won't feel inclined to bluff."

"That 's a principle of the American Constitution," answered Ritchie.

General Reichshoffer was puzzled to account for the delay

that ensued. True, his guns were actively engaged by the British artillery, and a cloud of skirmishers enveloped his front, but there was an absence of the definite attack which he expected. The reputation enjoyed by his assailants did not warrant any assumption of undue timidity on their part, and at last the German general lost patience. He sent out three regiments, supported by a battery and two squadrons of cavalry, to conduct a reconnaissance in force.

The line of British skirmishers fell back steadily before this development, and the guns also were compelled to change their position.

Anxiously watching the progress of events from a church tower, Reichshoffer was still more astonished as he beheld this manœuvre.

Elated by his success, the commander of the reconnaissance allowed his men to get a little out of hand in the eagerness with which they achieved their task, and he did not see the rapid detour made by Gough's horsemen through a slight declivity, with the evident intention to take the advancing Germans in flank. From his elevated position Reichshoffer perceived the movement clearly enough, and he roared orders from the balustrade to a staff officer beneath, to ride his best and recall the detachment.

It was too late.

Barely had the officer started on his mission, when the rattle of rifle-fire in the rear distracted attention to the determined attack now being delivered in that direction, and long before the aide had reached the reconnaissance party, Colonel Gough had dissipated them into thin air, capturing their guns and cutting the cavalry support into ribands.

The beautiful order and precision of the German forces in Neuminster now gave way to the wildest confusion.

A rush was made to line the hedge-rows and garden-walls on the south of the town, but before an effective defence could be arranged, the 7th Pennsylvania and the 1st Battal-

ion of the Derbyshire Regiment, were racing up the Market Strasse.

The struggle for the possession of the town was short but stubborn. It was characterised by more than one noteworthy incident of personal bravery on the part of both attackers and defenders.

A German officer, deserted by his company when a fierce onrush was made by the Derbyshires, stood alone in the centre of a narrow street.

His sword-arm was broken by a bullet, but he calmly drew a revolver and fired steadily three times into the mass of his assailants. The Englishman leading the advance called upon him to surrender, but the gallant Brunswicker's reply was a bullet which ripped off his adversary's shoulder-knot.

An instant later he was knocked down, and it is to the credit of the chivalrous Tommies that they did not give him a vicious bayonet-thrust as they passed, for he had wounded two of their comrades.

An American officer, cheering on the leading company of the 7th Pennsylvania, which had now penetrated to the north end of Neuminster, carelessly leaped his horse across a barricade and rode forward a few yards.

He was momentarily separated from his men, and at that instant half a dozen Uhlans, returning precipitately from the wreck of the reconnaissance party, dashed up to him.

Half frenzied with the sudden collapse of their assumed victory, the Uhlans resolved to pay off the score in the person of one enemy at least. It did not seem that the life of this fine soldier was worth a moment's purchase.

But he was an excellent horseman, and cool as an iceberg.

Pulling his charger back on to its hind legs and wheeling simultaneously, at the imminent risk of a headlong fall, the American disconcerted the aim of the first two lances levelled at him, and received a sword cut on the forte of his own weapon.

Yet another lance darted forward but again missed, for the

American had bent forward on his horse's neck and fired a revolver shot under the animal's head. More by luck than design the bullet found a resting-place in the thorax of one of the six, but still the odds were terribly uneven.

The Uhlans were desperately in earnest and heedless of their own safety, for rifle-shots were now whistling through the crowd, as the men realised that they must risk hitting their officer if they would save him.

But a remarkable diversion occurred just then.

A youthful but gigantic private of the Derbyshire Regiment, who had early grasped the niceties of the situation, caught a riderless German horse on the near side of the barrier, jumped on to its back, and in a few powerful bounds was in the midst of the fray.

Grasping his rifle by the barrel he smashed off the stock against the head of the first Uhlan he encountered. He raised the heavy weapon again to put it to similar use, but only in time to save himself from a well-delivered cut from a man on the near side, which failed in its object, but sent the gun-barrel flying out of his hand.

Carried forward by his first wild rush, the Derbyshire man was driven, unarmed, between two of the Uhlans. Never losing his head for a fraction of a second, he saw that neither was ready to lunge at him, so he threw out his arms, kicked his charger fiercely to urge him on, and succeeded in dragging both of his opponents backwards out of their saddles. He clashed their heads together as though they were feather pillows, and flung the pair senseless to the ground.

By this time the Pennsylvanian had run one gentleman from Brandenburg through the body, and the sixth having got clear of the *mêlée*, galloped off in the hope of escaping. But the officer rode after him, and within a few yards the Uhlan threw away his sword and raised his right arm aloft in token of surrender.

The American trotted back towards his rescuer, held out his hand, and said heartily:

“ Shake ! ”

The Englishman responded as cordially, and then dismounted to rejoin his regiment.

Lord Falmouth had witnessed the whole incident. Leaning over towards an officer of the Derbyshires, he said:

“ What is the name of that youngster ? ”

“ Oh,” was the reply, “ that ’s Jones, of Balliol.”

“ Jones, of Balliol ? ” repeated his lordship, puzzled by the glibness of the answer.

“ Yes. He failed for Sandhurst, so his father hoped to cure his thickheadedness by sending him to Oxford for a couple of years. He has won undying fame by getting himself chucked out of the Empire last boat-race night at 8.15.”

“ That ’s rather early, is n’t it ? ” said Lord Falmouth, recalling his youthful experiences.

“ Early ! ” exclaimed the other, with the warmth of genuine admiration. “ Why, it broke the record by twenty-five minutes ! ”

“ The Duke must know of this,” observed his lordship, and the acute reader can be trusted to understand which of the two incidents he meant.

Anyhow, Jones of Balliol came out of the campaign a better man than he went in, for he commanded a company in his own regiment.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RIGOUR OF THE GAME.

FOR two days and nights the English and American troops toiled unceasingly whilst they landed guns, stores, forage, and horses, and pushed rapidly ahead for the front at Neuminster.

What few moments of relaxation were snatched by the officers and men from the "old country" were devoted to items of gossip concerning the manner in which the Yankees "fixed up" everything in which they were deficient.

Proportionately to their numbers they were short of cavalry, and Colonel Ritchie proposed that his San Franciscans should be mounted on the German horses captured at Neuminster. General Smithson assented with equal nonchalance, and the English staff were amazed to see the change effected within a few hours. They argued, of course, complete disaster for the regiment should it come into contact with the highly-trained cavalry of the enemy, but they soon had cause to alter their opinion.

There were plenty of spare guns on board the transports, and the Duke of Connaught, faithful to his promise of non-interference, did not even elevate his eyebrows when the chief of the United States staff applied for sixty 12-pounders, so that he might "fix up" ten field batteries.

The American also asked that a number of non-commissioned artillery officers should be lent to him, until the men "got the hang of it," which he assumed would be the case before they would be needed in action—a statement which brought a sardonic grin to the face of the R.A. veteran

whose duty it was to pick out the requisitioned instructors. Nevertheless, it will suffice to say that although the United States gunners could not hope to so quickly attain the high pitch of excellence shown by the British artillery, they accomplished marvels in the shape of actual work when the next great battle was fought.

Nor had they to wait long for this much talked-of event.

When two great armies are spoiling for a fight there is usually not any insurmountable difficulty in accommodating them. The British forces pressed on to Neuminster, and the Germans, on their part, did not let the grass grow beneath their feet in hurrying forward preparations for a strong attempt to hurl the invaders out of the Fatherland.

By a seemingly tacit understanding the British—under which term the United States' forces are quite naturally included—and the German commanders regarded Oldesloe as the ultimate theatre of operations. Although scouting by considerable detachments of cavalry and more determined reconnaissances were indulged in on both sides, there was no serious affair between the belligerents until they had massed their armies within thirty miles of each other, with Oldesloe lying midway between.

During one of these minor affrays a driver of the Army Service Corps earned immortality by a feat of remarkable endurance, which has seldom, if ever, been paralleled in the annals of war.

The company to which he belonged was convoying a quantity of stores along the left flank of the British lines of communication when suddenly two squadrons of Prussian cavalry swept round the head of a dense clump of trees and delivered a well-timed charge, with the evident object of destroying the train.

The officer in command of the Army Service Corps detachment was young, and had never seen a fight outside the Long Valley, but he put into practice with the ease and confidence of a veteran the precepts therein acquired.

In obedience to his commands, men and horses started from the quiet jog of the march into a thunderous gallop.

Within half a minute they had formed a triangular laager, of which the waggons supplied the three external faces, the horses being safely ensconced inside.

This is a difficult and dangerous manœuvre either in peace or war.

The waggons advance, for the most part, in echelon formation, and the slightest deviation of a vehicle will infallibly bring down the horses of its successor, possibly involving a section of a column in common ruin.

The formation was accomplished without apparent hitch, and the magazine rifles were soon busy in emptying German saddles.

The incident was ended almost as soon as it had commenced. It was then noticed that the driver of one pair of horses did not rise from the ground, where he had fallen after getting his waggon into correct position. A sergeant spoke to him, and then bent over him to hear the poor fellow say feebly:

"I can't get up, sergeant. My left leg was smashed at the knee-joint by No. 5 waggon when the row commenced."

This gallant soldier had nevertheless kept his seat and guided his team until his duty was performed to the letter. Then the anguish he was enduring conquered his iron nerve, and he collapsed.

At the close of the campaign the Duke appointed him his coachman, but the brave fellow was lame for life.

Field-Marshal Prince Albert of Prussia had been selected by the Emperor to command this second Grand Army. He led his own Westphalian Army Corps into the field, and had at his disposal nine other territorial corps, making a total force of 330,000 men, with 400 guns and 11,000 horses.

This gigantic force had been exercised together, as it happened, during the preceding autumn manœuvres, and Prince Albert was in command on that occasion. He knew

his staff thoroughly, and his men had complete confidence in him, for his reputation as a general stood very high, dating back from his distinguished services as a cavalry leader in more than one section of the Franco-German war.

A thoroughly conscientious soldier, to whom fatigue or trouble were unconsidered trifles when duty was to be done, this German Prince had more of the Slav than the Teuton in his composition. Were one told that he was a Romanoff, the lofty forehead, square, stern face, and firm chin, with its heavy underlip, would not belie the story. Such a man, at the head of such troops, was a very solid fact in the way of the British advance.

To oppose him, the Duke of Connaught surveyed at Neu-minster two fine English army corps of 70,000 men each, and slightly over 100,000 American soldiers. This total of 240,000 was split up into twenty-four divisions, each containing four small but compact brigades. There were 250 guns of field and horse artillery, and some 12,000 cavalry, to which arm the Americans contributed 5000.

On the night of the 16th of June, all preparations having been made for an advance in the direction of Oldesloe on the following day, the Duke of Connaught summoned a Council of War.

He briefly stated his plan of action, so far as this could be foreseen prior to actual contact with the enemy.

"From information gathered by a very daring bit of cavalry scouting carried out by the 14th Hussars," he said, "it is evident that the Germans are in greater force towards Hamburg than on the Lübeck side. The British right wing must consequently be of exceptional strength, and I shall be glad if General Smithson will regard this as his special post."

General Smithson smiled with the air of a man who has a responsible but highly pleasant task intrusted to him.

"My own troops," continued the Commander-in-Chief, "will form the centre and left wing. With the exception

of a small cavalry escort for the guns, which will at the outset be massed in the centre, I propose that the four cavalry brigades be equally divided for service on the flanks."

All present agreed that this arrangement would facilitate the next day's march, as the men could proceed to their allotted positions with the least expenditure of energy, an important consideration, for they were already suffering from the severe strain of the debarkation and subsequent events.

"I take it, Prince," said General Smithson, "that you have not yet made up your mind as to the programme?"

The Duke by this time knew his man fairly well, and understood, without possible reason, that the American officer had some ulterior motive in asking this apparently aimless question.

"I cannot decide definitely upon a certain course until I have learnt something of the enemy's intentions," he replied.

"Of course, of course," assented the other. "I was only figuring things out on general principles, so to speak."

"Well, and won't you tell us what you have figured out, sir," said the Duke, turning earnestly towards his colleague.

"You see, it's just this way," was the answer, given in deliberate and convincing tones, "tired men can't fight well, nohow. We'll allow that the enemy is as dead beat as we are after we get jammed close together at the end of the day's march. Nobody will feel disappointed if there is n't any trouble to-morrow night. Next morning both parties will want to get to business quite early, and the affair won't end in ten minutes. In this sort of country, with nothing but grass plots and bits of forest dotted about the view, there's likely to be more give and take fighting than in broken land, where position is half the battle. And I calculate the Germans are about three to two of us."

General Smithson paused to arrange his cigar more com-

fortably, and every man in the Commander-in-Chief's quarters felt that this shrewd American was about to propound some scheme as the result of his cogitations.

"Odds are odds all the world over," he continued, "and, on paper, we ought to get a considerable licking."

An impulsive cavalry officer here broke into Smithson's slow speech.

"That is a poor spirit in which to begin," he cried, a hot flush mounting to his face.

The Duke promptly interfered. "Have the goodness to permit General Smithson to proceed. So far, I agree with every word he has uttered."

"If you think hard enough you'll take the same view," said the United States commander, pointing the stump of his cigar at the interrupter. "Now, it seems to me," he went on, "that if we can select the best possible position near Oldesloe, Prince Albert will hurry up to attack us. Two men can hold a place against three, but they cannot turn three out of their location unless they choose to quit. If we can make the Germans sweat themselves against us, our boys taking it fairly easy in between times, we might be able at the close of the game to play them up strong when they have already done all they want to do for one day."

This advice was so obviously sound that it was unanimously adopted, and the impetuous cavalryman seized the earliest opportunity to apologise for the unnecessary heat he had displayed.

"Cork up your energy," said General Smithson good-humouredly. "You'll want it before you go to sleep on the 18th."

Following the example set by Lord Roberts before the recent operations in the valley of the Seine, the Duke of Connaught issued, in the "Orders of the Day," a stirring reminder to his men of the anniversary of Waterloo.

"To-morrow," ran his words, "we will be fortified by the reflection that in facing a vastly more numerous foe we

shall be only following the glorious precedent of our forefathers on another 18th of June.

"The firmness, the discipline, the calm courage, which enabled the men of Waterloo to crush Napoleon's troops are hereditary qualities in the English-speaking race.

"Whether from east or west of the Atlantic, we are equally the successors of the heroes who fought under Wellington in Spain and France. I have never entered upon any solemn undertaking in the course of my life with such certainty as I feel upon this, the eve of our first great battle on German soil.

"Do we need deeds to emulate—they are supplied by our comrades afloat and ashore. We are fortified by the knowledge of their achievements; we are strengthened by the conviction that the guardianship of the sacred cause of our nation is as fully committed to our hands as to theirs.

"I have but one instruction to add for the common guidance to-morrow. There is plenty of ammunition. Shoot often, but—above all else—shoot straight."

Both Thomas Atkins and Brother Jonathan read these utterances with much approval. These gentlemen now rejoiced in a common title, "The Busters." For a little while they were at a loss for a synonym which briefly expressed the composite elements of the army, until some pretty wit devised this word, which not only gave an elegant combination of the "British" and "U. S.," but also supplied phonetic expression to their peculiar attributes in the robust vernacular of the streets.

There was a philosophic value in the phrase. It conveyed the idea of complete unity, and at once swept aside possibilities of jealousy and differentiation.

The "Busters," then, took affidavit in approved form that they would "plate" or "get the drop on" the Germans to their best powers. The anniversary of Waterloo should certainly not want a fitting celebration.

The Commander-in-Chief was wise enough to give his men

ample rest on the night of the 16th. Not until noon of the following day did the march of the infantry begin. But in the early hours the Duke and General Smithson, safeguarded from risk by a strong cavalry escort, surveyed the country near Oldesloe, selected the ground to be occupied by each division, and gave specific instructions to the staff-officers who would accompany divisional commanders to their particular stations.

On the night of the 17th the weather was fine and clear. From the absolute quiet that obtained in the vicinity of Oldesloe, one might have thought that nowhere on earth did more profound peace and restful security prevail.

The inhabitants of the little town had long since fled. It was now occupied by the advance guard of the German army, which was spread over a front of nearly four miles. The British front was more extended, running to fully five miles, and the men lay in the formation already described, two British and one American division supplying a reserve, stationed a mile in rear of the centre.

Despite the apparent stillness of the allies they were individually as busy as bees. During the few hours of dusk officers and men of the Sappers worked with feverish activity along the crest and on the slope of a marked undulation in the ground which fell away towards Oldesloe. They hammered tent-pegs into the soil, tied long lines of thick cord to these, and measured, and paced, and triangulated as though their lives depended upon a nice pattern being traced upon the face of the earth.

Infantry officers attended these operations with great earnestness, and then hurried off to divide all regimental duties between half battalions.

The result was that 120,000 men slept, whilst their comrades toiled unceasingly with pick and shovel in the construction of field works and shelter trenches.

This quantity of labour skilfully adapted, and every man applying himself like a little steam-engine, can shift a good

many cubic yards of earth, and when *reveille* sounded at 4 a.m., the entire British front was guarded with two complete lines of entrenchments.

The now weary men—who had, as it transpired, already won the battle by their unflagging industry—retired to eat and sleep. Not even the tornado of lead and gunpowder that soon sprang into demoniacal life disturbed their repose for the few brief hours of rest vouchsafed to them.

Shortly after the relief had been effected firing commenced.

The German artillery tried to devote themselves to a general shelling of the allied position; but our gunners soon altered their views, and a fine duel ensued.

This was damaging enough to both sides while it lasted, but Prince Albert did not delay his infantry attack, which, as the Duke of Connaught had anticipated, assumed the most pronounced form on the right.

Three successive German army corps hurled themselves with splendid *élan* upon the Americans, and were driven back with a precision and loss, that must have brought joy to the heart of Jomini himself, could he have witnessed the scene.

At the imminent risk of his life the Duke rode out in front of the centre to a point whence he could observe the proceedings. Not one word did he speak to the small staff with him until the third German line reeled away into nothingness before the hail of bullets that beat upon them.

Then he turned his horse's head towards the English lines, observing as the charger broke into a trot :

“ If we do as well, this will be the greatest battle in history.”

Prince Albert had now got his huge army within striking distance. Although he was surprised and annoyed at the manner and method of the first repulse he resolved to deliver a sledge-hammer blow at the entire British front.

Six army corps, aggregating nearly 200,000 men, ad-

vanced simultaneously across the plains and entered upon the second important phase of the struggle. They were formed in brigades of 5000, of which one-fourth supplied the fighting-line and the remainder acted as supports and reserves.

This great movement took nearly two hours to complete itself, and when the final impact came it had a directness and power wholly unprecedented in modern warfare.

The battle was now entirely one of the rank and file. Unlike most great engagements, every man was individually and actively engaged.

Notwithstanding the vaunted smokeless qualities of the gunpowder used by the combatants, a murky haze filled the intervening space, and even large bodies of troops could only be distinguished at short distances.

It was at this supreme moment that the British plan of action manifested its real excellence.

The artillery and machine guns had already obtained mechanical range for their different classes of projectiles, and the infantry, by resting their rifles in grooves pressed into the shelter trenches, were able to secure a reliable point-blank trajectory.

Fifteen thousand Germans were killed or wounded during that awful half-hour's advance, but still they pressed on, indifferent to death or disablement, and only eager to vindicate their hardly-won reputation as the one invincible army of the world.

Yard by yard they doggedly struggled forward, firing with vigour and precision into the ill-distinguished lines in front, staggering oft before the gusts of lead that whistled through them, but still grimly resolved to achieve their object or die in the attempt.

At the precise moment when it seemed that they would succeed, when already this living torrent was about to fill up the British dykes and swamp the whole line in inextinguishable disorder and, perhaps, disaster, two cavalry brigades

swept round the flanks at a headlong gallop, whilst the rest of the British horsemen, hastily recalled to right and left of the centre, poured through chaussées left for such a movement across the entrenchments and struck the disintegrated masses of German troops as lightning darts through a thunder-cloud.

Scattering in small detachments along the entire front, they whirled through the enemy's ranks with appalling effect. For a moment the advancing swarms quivered in struggle against the shock, and then melted away with the mist that rapidly dissipated owing to the cessation of firing.

When the dust and smoke had cleared somewhat, and the half-frenzied troopers were trotting back to the British lines in twos and threes, the scene of carnage along the five miles of front, for over a mile in depth, was one huge canvas of death.

It was pitiable, heart-sickening, more awesome than a plague-stricken city. It moved the victors to compassion, and the vanquished to unalleviated agony. They were most content who laid there, motionless and silent, for even the wounded were yet paralysed with the shock given to the frame by the modern projectile.

Prince Albert of Prussia now knew that he was beaten.

Nevertheless, with the icy coolness of despair, he determined to grasp fate by the throat.

If he could not succeed, it was at least possible to strike such a blow as would render it a question of weeks of delay before the British would be able to advance further into the interior.

The Duke of Connaught, who had grown ten years older during the last hour, anxiously noted some significant changes in the enemy's formation.

Guns and cavalry were being massed in the centre, and infantry were hurrying off towards the flanks.

The Duke was now called upon to solve a momentous problem, and he did so with the acumen and directness of a born leader of men.

He dispatched gallopers to warn General Smithson on the right, and Sir Richard Harrison on the left, to expect simultaneous flanking movements by infantry, whilst he summoned all the cavalry and guns to assemble in rear of centre with the utmost possible dispatch. By this time, too, the second half of the British army was in the trenches, and the men who ought to have been relieved felt mutinous when ordered to retire. So they were left alone.

Not one moment too soon had the Duke made his new arrangements.

Precisely at eleven o'clock the Prussian Commander-in-Chief launched his final blow.

Under cover of a continuous artillery fire, 15,000 German cavalry, led by the Field-Marshal in person—for the secret desire of the Emperor was strong within his own breast—trotted towards the British centre with the intention of repeating Von Bredow's Death Ride at Mars la Tour.

If this avalanche of men and horses could ride through those lines as their predecessors dashed through the French on that memorable day, they might double up the British front, and render successful the progressing flank attacks.

If they gained their object they committed both parties to indescribable slaughter; if they failed, it meant annihilation.

Breaking into a gallop at a distance of 1000 yards from the British, and heedless of the shrapnel now plunging through their ranks, the German cavalry swept splendidly forward.

They had barely traversed a quarter of the distance when the English and American cavalry brigades appeared on the slight crest of the infantry position, formed in line of columns with quiet rapidity, and Major-General Luck, the divisional leader, placed himself at their head, twenty paces in front of the centre regiment, the 2d Life Guards.

The right of the line was taken by Colonel Ritchie's followers, who had been christened, no one knew why, the "Sacramento Horse."

No orders were given, for amidst the din they would have been inaudible.

Urging his charger into a canter, General Luck raised his sabre high above his head, and looked back, to right and left along the line.

A great cheer burst forth, not alone from the troopers, but from every living man on the ridge, and the great charge commenced.

As the opposing bodies of cavalry neared each other, the sounds of conflict died away, and the thunder of the horses' feet upon the hard ground grew momentarily in volume.

When they were but a hundred yards apart, a member of the Duke of Connaught's staff yelled hysterically : " Great heavens, the Americans have not drawn their swords ! "

They had, but the weapons were dangling by the sword-knots from their wrists, and in each man's hands were a couple of revolvers, which he discharged point blank at the German cavalry in front ere the final crash came.

The effect was stupendous. Men and horses fell, the leading squadrons came to grief before they could strike a blow, and in the *mêlée* which ensued not a sabre was called into use until each American horseman had emptied the twelve chambers of his weapons into the mass of his opponents.

The result of this decided novelty in an affair of cavalry was soon seen. The three Uhlan regiments which met the soldiers of the United States were beaten immediately.

So rapid and decisive was their discomfiture, that Colonel Ritchie, who acted as brigadier of the right wing, was able to wheel his men and take the rest of the Germans in flank.

It is no discredit to the English horsemen to say that they did not find their task quite so easy. Lance met lance and sword clashed against sword, and for fully ten minutes the fight was the hardest any man present had experienced.

Locked as they were in the throes of a deadly struggle, for a little while they seemed to be a mere rabble. But at last the Prussians wavered and fell back. At this moment

came the diversion of the American attack on the enemy's left flank, and almost before the watching army had realised what had happened the Duke of Connaught gave orders for a general advance from the centre.

Smithson and Harrison seized the same opportunity to rush at the deploying German infantry, and when the sun sank to rest in the west, Prince Albert of Prussia was lying in the British field hospital, and his magnificent army was non-existent.

The loss of the British forces was terrible enough even under the circumstances of this glorious victory, whilst General Smithson said ruefully : " If we have a few more battles on this basis the United States will be broke with paying pensions. "

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND.

“ WHICH hand will you have ? ”

It was thus that Irene addressed her friend Ethel, looking very saucy and mischievous the while, and holding both her hands behind her back.

“ What do you mean, Irene ? ” asked Ethel quickly, turning white. Her little frame trembled as she caught the merry gleam in her friend’s eyes, and a great wild hope thrilled her that perhaps—perhaps——

“ Do not tease me, dear,” she said with a quivering voice, and a suspicion of tears, “ if it is something very, *very* important.”

“ You darling,” whispered Irene, melted by the appeal, as she put her arm round Ethel’s waist, and gave her a warm, impulsive kiss. “ You have guessed it—I am so glad ; for it ’s only your second ! ”

And with this she gave Ethel a letter, with queer stamps, and strange marks upon it, and wearing a travel-stained and woebegone appearance.

Ethel’s hand trembled as she took it, and she gazed with longing and tenderness upon the bold, clear penmanship she knew and loved so well.

“ From Simla ! ” exclaimed her friend. “ What a wonderful thing—and, oh, what a funny system they have ! It ’s numbered 114—whatever do they put that for ? ”

Ethel blushed as she answered with a nervous laugh :

“ It is n’t *they*, dear,” she said ; “ it ’s *he*.”

This vague explanation seemed quite clear enough to

Irene, who made no attempt to disentangle these ambiguous pronouns.

"But what does it mean?" she asked.

"It is a little invention of Frank's," explained Ethel confidentially. "It means that this is the 114th letter he has written me. We always put the number on the envelope, so that if any of our letters go astray we shall know at once. That little note I had from Malta was 113, so that I am certain Frank has n't sent any in between that have gone astray."

"Dear me," said Irene, looking deeply interested, "what a clever notion! I had no idea Frank was half so practical. I must really make Teddy do it. You know, dear, men are sometimes lax; it would keep them up to the mark amazingly. I should like to see Teddy dare to send me No. 200 in answer to my 280!"

"And you always know how many letters you really have had!" added Ethel.

"H'm! rather awkward, won't it be, when it gets into the first ten thousand?"

Ethel looked archly into her friend's face, and smiled.

"You goose!" she said slyly; "long before we get to that, there won't be need of any numbering!"

At which profound but obscure remark Irene beamed with comprehension, and gave Ethel a sudden hug that nearly imperilled her balance.

"But I won't delay you, darling," she went on, with motherly consideration; "I will finish my nocturne whilst you examine your treasure."

And as the sweet strains of Chopin's exquisite Nocturne in G floated through the room, Ethel opened her precious missive and, with beating heart and deep thankfulness, read and re-read her lover's message.

"Oh, Irene!" she exclaimed, when she had thoroughly devoured its contents, "I don't know *when* I shall get another. Frank is attached to the Indian army that is invad-

ing Russia. He's second in command of the Naval Brigade."

"Is he, dear?" cried Irene joyfully. "You have cause to be proud, Ethel. He is being promoted as rapidly as my Teddy."

"Our Teddy, you mean!" interjected Ethel mischievously. "But this departure takes him such a long way off, and you can't expect to find post-offices available in Siberia. But never mind, we must both be brave. I know that Frank will take as much care of himself as an honourable soldier may, and if anything should happen——"

"Don't, don't," exclaimed Irene hurriedly. "We can at least be worthy of our soldier sweethearts. We must be brave and hope. Honour before love even, is it not? Even if my heart were broken, I should not grudge it for my country—would you, dear?"

The two girls were very silent for a few moments, and Irene, kneeling down by the side of her friend, pressed her hand in quiet sympathy.

"What does he say?" she asked, after a pause which seemed to both like a solemn prayer.

"He tells me he is just starting for the front, and that there is a long march before him; he expects that the army will find trouble in Afghanistan. But he is confident that they will force their way to the Caspian. He believes they will fight their passage through to Moscow, and then he—no, that's all; the rest is quite unimportant."

Irene smiled, and her friend's blush did not escape her.

"A good deal of Teddy's letters are unimportant, too," she said archly. "And, between you and me, don't you like those bits best?"

All Ethel's reply was to snatch up her letter and put it away in some secret lodgment in her dress. Then she turned upon Irene with a look of mock severity.

"It's really very frivolous of you, my lady," she said, "to be wasting your time in idle jests when we have so much

work before us. Has it escaped you that we have each of us to organise our corps of nurses before the end of the week?"

Irene at once looked serious. A few days previously both of the girls had attended a meeting at Marlborough House, summoned by the Princess of Wales. For there was need now of the women of England. In the wake of battle and bloodshed they were wanted to tread with beneficent step, for already the wounded among the English troops had taxed to its utmost the resources of the ambulance corps. The first to realise this, and to plan a scheme of assistance, was the gracious Princess herself, who, after a long interview with Lord Wolseley, had invited the leading ladies of London society to meet her and help her to develop it and carry it into execution.

The Princess quickly found that there were as stout hearts and willing amongst the women of England as amongst the men. She briefly described the sufferings of our soldiers, and the kind of assistance that was needed. Before the meeting was over, nearly every lady of rank present had promised to organise and equip a corps of nurses for transportation to France and Germany. It was further decided that two trained hospital nurses should accompany each corps.

But this was not all. It was felt that every woman in England, who could afford her time or her money, should be allowed to share the satisfaction of this patriotic work. There was need of money, of lint, of bandages, of appliances, and the deft fingers of wife and maid alike would find unlimited occupation. The appeal that was made was taken up with enthusiasm, and in a few days the ambulance question was settled on a scale so magnificent that even the War Office was compelled to admiration.

"But, Ethel, dear," said Irene, when they had discussed it fully, "do you know, I have been thinking that for some of us—the younger of us, I mean—those of us who are strong

and healthy, it is not enough to send others. Ethel, is it not my place out there, too?" And she looked wistfully at her friend.

Ethel crept closer to her.

"Your place? And is n't it *mine*, too?" she asked softly.

"But I, that is you—I mean in France, darling?" Irene stammered.

"I cannot go to Siberia, if that's what you mean," and Ethel laughed gaily. "But if you go, I go also. We are both promised brides of soldiers—of gallant soldiers, Irene—of men who do their duty bravely, and do not shrink from danger even if their lives are at stake. Cannot *we* do something also? I have felt this inactivity a burden. I want to be up and doing. I think I could bear it better if I knew I was not sitting here in safety and in luxury, but was sharing the difficulties, if not the dangers also. Irene, dear, let us both go—you and I. It will be something, will it not?"

Irene kissed her friend with a feverish joy. It was her heart's desire.

And when the first contingent of nurses sailed from Southampton, Lady Irene Vyne and Miss Ethel Harington were amongst them.

A few days previous to this, and prior to the landing of the Duke of Connaught in Germany, an important meeting of the Council of National Safety was held at the Foreign Office. Not a single member was absent, and the deliberations were very solemn.

Lord Salisbury occupied the chair, and near him were the Prince of Wales, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour, and Lord Wolseley.

Recent events had caused, not public elation, but a more buoyant spirit, a more assured confidence. But the leaders of the nation were grave, and gravest among them all was the Commander-in-Chief.

"Our difficulties become at least less overwhelming," Mr. Chamberlain had observed. "Each day has to some extent relieved the situation."

Mr. Balfour shook his head. "The most serious dangers find the stubbornest resistance," he observed reflectingly. "There is a time of heat, exasperation, of recklessness. But when the most menacing obstacles are swept away, there comes the time when men need qualities that are rare—endurance, persistence, wearisome application to monotonous effort. In my own opinion, we have reached the supreme crisis of the war."

"And the moment," added Lord Rosebery, "when fortunately our best qualities will be called into play. For surely if English soldiers have an acknowledged virtue it is their stubbornness, their calm persistence, and their fertility of resource."

"Let us hope, Mr. Balfour," said the Prince, "that your fears may only prove a matter of philosophic doubt!"

A smile flitted round the Council.

"We are in this position," interposed Lord Salisbury. "Our army in Central Asia will keep Russia occupied. Sir Evelyn Wood is master in his defences, and when the Duke has seized the Kiel Canal, Germany will be unable to make any progress. We have inflicted severe defeats upon France. Locked as the situation is elsewhere, we have to turn our attention mainly to the last-named country. Retaliation must come sharply and vehemently. What are we to do to assist Lord Roberts? It is likely, in fact, that the great struggle of the war will be confined to France. We must concentrate our forces there."

All eyes were turned to Lord Wolseley.

"I am in agreement with Lord Salisbury," he said. "We cannot do all we should like. But whilst the Duke of Connaught and Sir Evelyn may be safely left to hold their own, there is grave peril in France. We have defeated two army corps, but the strongest of all remains—I mean that stationed

at Chalons. It has long been mustered there for possible service with Germany, but it will assuredly be summoned to meet Lord Roberts. Our chief necessity, therefore, is to create a diversion, to make some new and counter-attack which shall leave Lord Roberts to establish and confirm the advantage he has obtained."

Mr. Gladstone, who had been listening attentively, here struck in.

"A very curious coincidence," he exclaimed. "In one of my spare hours yesterday I amused myself with translating a portion of Homer into rough hexameters. It was the ninth book, when—" and he turned to Mr. Balfour, "you will remember that a similar situation occurs—but," stopping short with a smile, "you will tell me with justice that this will better serve the purposes of a magazine article. I presume, Lord Wolseley, that you propose to land a second army corps in France, and, I should guess, in the south?"

"That is so," answered the Commander-in-Chief, a little surprised. "With the additions from Canada and other colonies, together with our new levies, it will not be difficult to land an army of 250,000 men at Marseilles or some such port. If we occupy southern France the Chalons army will necessarily be compelled to march to meet us to protect Lyons. We shall then relieve our forces in the north. It is highly important that we should do this without delay, and that we should be prepared to make a most skilful and protracted stand. Indeed, upon the complete success of our operations in the south will largely, I may say entirely, depend the fulfilment of Lord Roberts's plan of campaign in the north."

Lord Wolseley here produced a map of the south coast of France, and also a schedule detailing the strength of this new and formidable force he proposed to hurl upon it. For some time a close and eager discussion was maintained.

Then Lord Salisbury observed :

"It is a move of the utmost importance, and needing the

finest generalship. Whom do you propose to place at the head of our Mediterranean Army Corps?" And he looked at the Commander-in-Chief.

Lord Wolseley coloured slightly. He yearned like a true soldier for actual service on the field of war. His position had kept him at Whitehall, where his extraordinary powers of organisation and his complete grasp of the minutest details had contributed more than the efforts of any other man to the success of English arms abroad. His was the controlling brain, the executive intellect. His foresight, his counsel, his elaborate plans for attack and defence, his unrivalled genius for commissariat, had given a unanimity, a solidity, a sureness to the British tactics, which largely accounted for their success. But he was still a soldier, and might he not now taste some of the active dangers and responsibilities of the field of battle?

Such thoughts had passed through his mind. So, in reply to Lord Salisbury's challenge, he said :

"Gentlemen, this new development in our system of attack is of the gravest and most responsible character. I have remained long in London, and done all that was open to me to expedite our affairs abroad. I think that now it devolves upon me to take upon myself more active duties still. I ask you that I may myself take command of the Mediterranean Army Corps."

At these words a dead silence fell upon the Council, and despite the expressionless stolidity which comes of diplomatic training, a look of blank dismay settled for a moment upon every face.

There was not one present who did not know that the whole success of the war depended to a large extent upon the skill and resource of Lord Wolseley at the centre of operations—upon his clear, calm, swift decision exercised in his office in Pall Mall, where he sat at the converging point of all the many complex threads of this involved and intricate struggle. To dispatch him for service abroad was nothing

less than to dispense with the brain and nervous centre of the whole British army. Yet they sympathised with the yearning of a born soldier to taste the stimulating joy of actual warfare, and they realised how the Commander-in-Chief's heart must have been from the first in the midst of the troops he loved so well.

But to gratify this desire was impossible. And yet how could it be refused with tact and kindliness?

There was a breath of relief when Mr. Gladstone jumped into the breach at this critical moment. He appreciated the difficulties of the situation, and his subtle mind, accustomed to delicate positions, rejoiced at this new opportunity for wily statesmanship.

"My lord," he said gravely, "what you have said is doubtless of the utmost gravity, and I am sure that a suggestion half wins our consent if made by you. We are prepared to carry into execution any design which your wisdom and experience clearly tell you to be essential for the success of our cause. You are aware that, so far as practical warfare is concerned, we are entirely in your hands. It is your vastly responsible duty to consider any situation that may arise, and, after coming to a mature conviction, to place us in possession of it. We are dependent upon you. I, for one, will be the first to propose that you are placed in command, if you will, remembering the national trust reposed in us, assure us that, from a military point of view, it is absolutely the best and wisest course."

Lord Wolseley sighed inwardly. He realised he was doomed to remain. The Council had shirked the responsibility. They had asked him, as a soldier, and depending upon his impartiality, to settle his own fate. Under such conditions there was but one course open to him.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "since that is the light in which you regard it, I have no alternative. I can now spare General Sir Redvers Buller—the honour must fall to him."

The Council sought discreetly to conceal its satisfaction ; but there was an audible movement of relief. And General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., was duly appointed.

“ And yet,” grumbled Lord Wolseley to himself afterwards, with a quizzical expression of face, as he saw Mr. Gladstone depart, innocence upon his cheeks and a guileless smile upon his lips—“ and yet I supported that man’s short-service system ! ”

And he made some trite observations upon the luck of some men as he wrote a brief dispatch to Sir Redvers Buller, telling him of his good fortune.

In due course that gallant officer succeeded in effecting a lodgment at Marseilles.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SHADOW OF DOOM.

IN one of the chief streets of St. Petersburg stands an imposing house whose bold façade seems to challenge the gaze of the passer-by and to thrust itself forward with proud security in that great City of Despair.

No one would dream of associating it with intrigue or crime. Not the secret police themselves, as they slunk along, in unsleeping watchfulness, had ever looked upon it with distrust. As its powerful owner passed in and out he was greeted with deference; for his influence was great in high quarters, and his arm was long and merciless.

And yet within a fortnight of the passing of the British army into Central Asia, a strange meeting and a strange conversation took place within this princely house, which would indeed have exercised the speculation of the police could they have been present in secret.

On a certain afternoon in June, an officer of the Imperial Guard sat in the spacious library, engaged intently in examining a series of maps and statistical tables which lay exposed, carefully drawn and coloured, with many curious marks and signs, upon the table. He wore the rich uniform of the royal service, but he was clearly not occupied at the moment with royal business.

He looked up from the documents he was examining, and hastily glanced at the clock. Then he drew down the shutter of his desk, threw himself into an easy-chair and waited.

His thoughts wandered to the stupendous, the sublime task which he had made the object of his life's mission, a

task to which he had sacrificed everything, love, honour, happiness, and for which he had courted danger and death.

For he was one of the brave champions of Russian freedom. He strove to attain nothing less than the liberty of his native land and the deliverance of her people. And now the hour seemed to approach, the hour of destiny, for him, for the throne, for the great Empire of the East.

“ Count Lucovitch, sir.”

It was his servant who thus broke in upon his reveries.

Pochowski, such was his name, rose. As he did so, a tall officer, of noble aspect, with stern, resolute face, and firm stride, entered the room, and bowed with a touch of ceremony.

“ You have not failed me,” said Pochowski. “ We have but an hour, and we must lose no time.”

“ An hour? What do you mean?” asked his visitor in surprise.

“ Count,” said Pochowski gravely, “ in an hour the fate of Russia will be decided. We shall meet the Provincial Presidents. We shall decide whether we shall take this supreme opportunity which Providence has given us, of winning independence for our country and freedom for our people, or let the tale of Russian servitude roll garrulously on for another century.”

“ I have consented to discuss with you, captain,” Lucovitch observed, “ this torturing position. I have not consented to take a part; much less to give assent so soon. Our country is now in danger. Is it not the first duty of patriotism to rid our shores of foreign enemies before we turn to rend ourselves?”

Pochowski took from a cabinet at his side a bundle of papers and rapidly glanced through them.

“ These are the reports handed to me as Supreme Head of the Nihilist Party,” he said at last. “ At the present moment there are 640,000 of Russia’s bravest sons ready to take the field if called upon to vindicate their liberties. It

needs but a word, and a vast host of indomitable spirits will swarm around the capital and crush it in their grip."

"What!" cried the Count, in tones of horror, "whilst the Tsar is thus beset?"

"Precisely, sir," exclaimed Pochowski in commanding tones. "The blow must be struck now or never. Can you conceive it possible that if the Tsar wins this infamous war, we shall ever again have such a chance, when the hand of despotism is strengthened and the champion of liberty is hurled to the dust? Let us by all means be patriots. But what is patriotism? It is to fight for the people, for their freedom, for the restitution of their manhood; not for tyranny and oppression, villainy and dishonour. Now is the moment of destiny. The whole world is fighting its great battle of independence. Do you think this is merely a squabble of nations, merely a bout between England and her foes? You cannot. It is a war of principles. Oppression is striving for universal despotism. Liberty is striving for universal peace, for the true brotherhood of man. If England is beaten, we are all beaten, humanity is beaten with her. The light of freedom goes out; man crawls back into his chains; the dungeon once more gapes open. Yes, in such a struggle mere selfish and narrow patriotism is swallowed up. We must side, not with Russia or with England, but with right or wrong, with peace or war, with liberty or servitude. And in such a moment are we, *we* of all men, who suffer most, who have most to gain, to throw in our strength with the forces of evil, and hurl back the splendid birth-hour of a universal freedom? No, Count, your heart is too generous to harbour such a thought. We call upon you to become our general in the field. To *you* is intrusted the task of leading an invincible army to certain victory in a holy cause."

Pochowski's eyes glowed as he spoke thus passionately, and a pallor came over the Count's face. He was visibly moved.

"All this I see and admit," he remarked after a pause. "But I am a soldier, and how can I side with the invaders of my own country? It is this that haunts and disturbs me. How can we, in the cause of Russia, call in Russia's foes?"

"I might reply," answered the other quietly, "that in freedom's cause it is both natural and usual. Did not England call Holland in to help her, and America, France? Nay, the Dutch, too, sought the armies of Germany, and Germany those of England. And who more fit to help us than the great nation which has made liberty her watchword and is the bulwark of humanity? But I will not urge such pleas. Count, there is another point of view which I will lay before you."

"Ah! You have some scheme?"

"Let us be diplomats as well as soldiers," tranquilly replied Pochowski. "I will place before you the two only possibilities. I reject Russia's victory over England. You yourself cannot deny that, in such an event, our cause is lost for ever. Not we alone, but the whole earth will groan in servitude. Such a prospect we cannot even glance at. Let us, I say, reject it. Now, in the first place, England may conquer the Tsar and his armies—I do not say Russia, for it will not be Russia. The true Russian secretly longs for England's victory. England may conquer—I say she must and *will* conquer the Tsar's armies. She will sweep over our country and seize the capital. We shall be in the grip of a foreign nation. She will dictate her terms to us. Mind you, *I* do not fear that. I should welcome it, for I have confidence in England. She will give us our liberty. She will drive away the baneful breed of despots whose madness it is to believe themselves God-ordained autocrats of countless subjects. But how do *you* like such a situation? Would you prefer to have your rights given to you, not by yourself, or by your Tsar, but by a foreign power? Do you prefer that we shall be pensioners on the good-will of an alien race?"

The Count ground his teeth, but made no other reply. Pochowski went on:

"Well, there's your prior alternative. You do not care for it. Exactly! I guessed so. Then what is left? Clearly the course I have been advocating. If we do not care to have our freedom given to us—thrown to us—we must take it ourselves. And how? It is simplicity itself. We must summon together all the forces that we have, rouse Russia to her heart, seize the capital, dethrone the Tsar, and make ourselves masters of our own dominions. Having done that, we shall ourselves extend the hand of alliance to our invader, cancel the war, make our peace, give her indemnity, bid her retire, and then avoid the unlovely spectacle of our capital invested, and arrange terms of amnesty that shall be honourable to all. Is not that the only prudent—nay, the only noble—course that is open to us?"

Pochowski waited for a few moments whilst he allowed his words to sink into the heart of his hearer.

"But your Nihilist army," said the Count, after some reflection, "is but a poor, ungoverned horde."

Pochowski smiled.

"You may be pardoned the belief, Count," he replied; "it is a mistake that is carefully cultivated. But do you really believe that those poor wretches who throw around bombs and assault innocent people are the heads and leaders of our great movement? Let me assure you that they are rebels to the cause rather than its guides. We cannot restrain misguided fanatics; there must always be some madmen in so great a multitude of oppressed. Nay, we cannot even direct and be certain of them. There may yet be outrage. But it is abhorrent and abominable to me, to all our officers, to the great mass of our people, and, above all, to the cause. Believe me, that neither the People's Right nor the People's Will¹ dominates our movement. It is in high quarters, amongst men of rank and position, amongst

¹ The names of the two democratic parties of Russia.

our officers, wherever true greatness of soul animates a clear intelligence, that you must seek our leaders. When the time comes you will be amazed. Your neighbour, to right and left, your superior officer, your intimate friend, the nobleman whose patronage you seek—all will be found staunch and courageous champions of the cause. The real chivalry of Russia is on our side."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Count amazed. "Do you mean that the Court itself is so deeply tinged by it?"

"Wait!" was Pochowski's reply, and he smiled grimly as he spoke. "You will see, when the moment comes, how pitifully isolated, how tragically alone, is the race of the Romanoffs. There are those upon their side, we will grant—a few fanatics like themselves, some trained to the hateful and insidious lie which supports a despot's throne, most mere office-bearers and self-seekers, petty tyrants whose power is part of the greater power we seek to destroy. But when the hour of danger is at hand, how many of these will stand by and give their lives for a hopeless cause?"

The Count rose and paced the room, and as he moved the watchful eyes of his host followed him. At length he turned, and, approaching Pochowski, said:

"Either way there is something that is distasteful. But it may be that personal pride, perhaps even personal honour, must yield to a greater principle. I have heard your arguments and admit them. I will do what you say. I will command your army, and will even lay hands upon His Majesty. But upon one condition. It is that there must be no swerving from the policy you have outlined. We, the people of Russia, shall fight our own battle of liberty, and then, supreme in our own capital, bid England retire. We will grant what terms she demands. But it must be our defence that we would ourselves spare Russia the degradation of a hostile investment, and—since our government is so mad as to seek our own humiliation—that we throw it aside the better to protect the honour of our native land."

These words, spoken with quiet dignity, moved his hearer. Rising to his feet, Pochowski held out his hand.

"May I die the death of a traitor and be despised of all men," he said, "if I am guilty of thought, word, or deed, that is dishonourable to the true cause of patriotism."

The two men gripped each other's hands. Each was affected by the tragedy of this solemn dedication.

"It is one of the greatest moments of the world's history. So must Brutus and Cassius have felt when they swore alliance for the death of Cæsar!" It was the Count who spoke.

"I accept the omen!" cried Pochowski. "So may the new Cæsar be overthrown and no new Antony undo our work. But our hour is up. You must come with me. Henceforth we shall have little time for speech."

The two officers descended the stairs, and, entering a carriage already awaiting them, drove rapidly off.

"Conspiracy does not always conceal itself!" declared the Count almost gaily.

"Conspiracy that conceals itself," observed Pochowski, "acknowledges itself already beaten. We are safe because we are too transparent. If you wish to avoid detection, do not shun the policeman; make love to his daughter!"

Thus jesting, they passed through some of the spacious streets of the Capital, until they reached a noble house, palatial in size, and buried amongst trees already heavy with summer foliage.

The Count started.

"Duke Paul's!" he exclaimed in amazed tones.

Pochowski nodded.

"He cannot help us, but he is with us. Blood ties cannot be rudely broken. But he is a generous patriot, and throws around us his protection. Do you not know that through his influence alone our great teacher, Tolstoï, has escaped persecution?"

The Count looked further mystified. But he made no reply. In a few moments they had entered.

Without delaying, Pochowski and his companion pressed

forward, and passing through a door at the end of the passage, descended into a spacious apartment, where, scattered around in little groups, sat a score or so of men.

They rose to their feet as the President entered, and, as they observed the Count, exchanged looks of mutual satisfaction.

Proceeding to a raised chair at the end of the room, and keeping the Count by his side, Pochowski called upon the delegates assembled to make their statements.

It appeared that European Russia was divided into twenty-eight districts, each of which had several subdivisions. In every district was a Nihilist officer of repute, whose duty it was to keep himself accurately informed of the number and strength of the multitude under his control. He was unknown to any save the sub-officers, and his sympathy with the popular party had never created a moment's suspicion in the minds of the bureaucracy. On this fateful day, summoned by urgent messages, they assembled to report themselves and to deliberate on the great step that was about to be taken.

Each in turn rose and made his brief speech. And every speech was as satisfactory as it was terse. It appeared that there were, in all, nearly 700,000 sturdy enthusiasts ready when called upon to take the field. Some of them had been trained in war, many had been exercised in drill and with the rifle. Animated by a fierce, indomitable spirit of patriotic ardour, they formed a superb army which, distracted by a double invasion, the Tsar would find difficult, nay impossible, to withstand.

"You have made it clear," demanded Pochowski, when they had done, "that there is to be no outrage, no individual violence, no private revenge? And you have forbidden dynamite and such brutal instruments of carnage?"

There was a common assurance of this.

"I have done all I can," observed one (he was President of the Moscow District), "but I guarantee nothing. There are fanatics who will promise anything, but can never be

trusted. Moscow," he added significantly, "has suffered much from the Imperial scourge."

"It is instant death to anyone who violates the strict rule of war," replied Pochowski sternly, and his brow became overcast. "Meanwhile I have the pleasant tidings to impart, that Count Lucovitch has consented to take supreme command in the field. He will meet you here to-morrow and give you full instructions. The blow must be struck at once."

There was a murmur of approval at this intelligence, and the officers pressed round the Count, whose knowledge of military tactics was held in high regard, and congratulated him upon the noble part he had consented to play in the liberation of his country.

"It is not altogether with a glad heart, gentlemen," he responded; "but I cannot oppose my private feelings to the supreme considerations that are before us. We shall at least be allies of England and not dependents. Our cause is the same. We fight for the liberation of Russia, and she for the liberation of the world."

In another hour's time, after some consultation and much anxious questioning, the two Nihilist chiefs drove off. Neither of them slept that night. Until early the next morning they were deep in discussion and in the examination of charts and reports and in searching criticism of the position. Before St. Petersburg rose for its breakfast its fate was determined.

And thus, when England was hurling her splendid armies upon the shores of Russia, a terrible and irresistible danger grew to monstrous maturity in the very heart of the empire, and the grim shadow of fate was creeping upon the throne itself.

It was a situation worthy of the Greek tragedian. Whilst exultant despotism, arrogant in its supremacy, was stretching out its hand for its final crown, its doom was already pronounced and its end prepared.

Dramatic irony such as this Sophokles himself would have appreciated.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RODNEY BECOMES AN ADMIRAL.

WHEN telegraphic confirmation reached India concerning Russia's decision to join the allies, the Government dispatched Captain W. J. Peyton of the 7th Bombay Lancers, Captain de Vismes, and three native officers to ride as quickly as possible to the Persian frontier on the south of the Transcaspian Railway.

The result was seen when early in July the leading detachments of the Indian army began to reach Uzun Ada, and the Naval Brigade was hurried forward among the first arrivals.

Rodney was now in command of this small party of three hundred sailors, as the senior officer originally selected for the post had the misfortune to fall ill shortly after the defeat of Alikhanoff on the banks of the Helmund.

Sir George White, the Commander-in-Chief, and his staff also travelled rapidly to the front, as the wholly unexpected success of Peyton's operations in Transcaspia had changed the aspect of affairs very materially. The Government of India had always contemplated the possibility of rudely upsetting Russia's preponderance in Central Asia, but the idea of marching the Indian Army to Moscow was generally regarded as a fantastic dream which must be utterly subjugated to the practical project of breaking down the Muscovite sway on the northern confines of Afghanistan.

Peyton's orders were to organise the nomads on the Persian frontier, with the assistance of the British officers sent to that locality months earlier. He was then to seize the Cen-

tral Asian Railway, with the vessels in the harbour at Uzun Ada, and this, with the help of Colonel Doyne's cavalry brigade on the Oxus side, he had accomplished.

The strategic position on the Afghan frontier was thus entirely altered.

Not only was Russia compelled to marshal her first line of defence to meet the British attack on the Black Sea littoral, but her Caucasian army was unable to cross the Caspian to attempt the re-conquest of the lost provinces, and it now became a matter of choice between developing the movement from India into a determined effort to penetrate to the capital, and quietly consolidating resources around Merv and on the Oxus, to await the outcome of events in European Russia.

In view of these two courses it was plain that Sir George White and his men were inclined to the more audacious one.

Rodney was in Uzun Ada two days before the Commander-in-Chief, and he lost no time in examining the available fleet. There were, in all, seventeen steamships, for which petroleum supplied the motive power. But they were small, with limited deck capacity, and, at the utmost stretch of accommodation, barely capable of bringing 10,000 men across the Caspian.

This inland sea, too, is liable to severe and unheralded storms, so that to crowd men into the wretched native craft that swarmed in the harbour, attracted thither by the news that roubles were now unusually plentiful, was to court disaster, whilst to attempt to occupy Baku with a small force meant absolute annihilation at the hands of Russia's best troops, the army of the Caucasus.

Rodney knew that the problem, tough as it was, must be solved somehow.

When Sir George White arrived he sent for him.

"Well, sir," he said genially to Frank, "now that you are the admiral, I must ask you how you propose to carry my army across to the other side."



"WELL, SIR, HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO CARRY MY ARMY ACROSS?"

"At the end of six days," said Rodney, "I will be able to land 100,000 men simultaneously at any point you may select within about thirty-six hours from the time of departure from this port."

"What?" shouted the Commander-in-Chief, astounded at this reply. "Surely it is impossible. They can't swim there, you know."

The sailor modestly disclaimed any such flight of genius as was suggested by the retort. He explained that there were eighty engines at present gathered on the sidings at Uzun Ada, together with 2000 waggons. There was an ample supply of timber available elsewhere, and he believed that by utilising the labour of every man in the place, something like forty gigantic rafts could be rapidly knocked together, whilst two engines per raft might be converted, with equal ease, into a modified form of the American rear-driving paddle-wheel principle. Each raft would hold 2000 men with stores. They would be fitted with sweeps to eke out the steam power, and the steamers would accompany them to safeguard against accident. The remainder of the troops could go on the steamships, and in the best of the native craft, but very few horses could be taken in the first expedition.

Rodney came to the interview prepared with plans and estimates of labour, and five minutes after the Commander-in-Chief was made fully acquainted with the details he accorded his hearty approval to the proposal, and the naval officer was given *carte blanche* with regard to men and money.

As the work went on it was deemed desirable to reduce the number of troops to 75,000, and to increase the space for horses and guns. Never stranger craft navigated the sea than these ingeniously constructed rafts, which when fully loaded were almost submerged. But the locomotives, fixed fore and aft, were placed on elevated platforms, and the first experiments showed that with steam alone a speed of two miles an hour was obtainable, whilst with long sweeps, each

manned by twenty strong-armed soldiers, this rate of progress was almost doubled.

Tommy revelled in the congenial task of christening these giant monsters. Officially, they were known by numbers, but this suited not the eclectic taste of the "swaddy."

Thus, No. 1 was called "Sudden Death," because a structural weakness at one end caused the sensational disappearance of an engine into the depths of the Caspian during the trial trip. No. 2 became "Lady Godiva," on account of a certain simplicity in outline which was found to be most convenient after experiment had shown the faults of the first construction. Nos. 5 and 7, built side by side, were dubbed respectively "Caster" and "Poleaxe."

"Admiral" Rodney hoisted his flag on the *Samarkhand*, the largest and most powerful of the Baku-Uzun Ada fleet, and it was a proud moment for him when he led the gigantic procession of ships, rafts, and dhows through the tortuous entrance channel and out into the open sea.

Everyone believed that an attack was to be made on Baku.

An unwonted degree of openness was manifested by Sir George White in discussing the possibilities of effecting a surprise during the hours of darkness by an unexpected landing in that neighbourhood, and the imprisoned officers of the Caspian steamers were closely questioned as to the conformation of the coast-line and the main features of the approach by water, with the possibilities of defence.

There was consequently much perturbation when it was discovered, on the morning of July 27th, the day fixed upon for the sailing of the expedition, that a steam launch had been mysteriously cut from her moorings in the night and was now well on her way to Baku, with half-a-dozen Russian officers on board.

The people who seemed to care least about the occurrence were those primarily responsible for it.

Sir George White and Rodney were supremely indifferent

to the obvious fact that, thus forewarned, the Grand Duke Paul would make it very hot indeed for the invaders, but this nonchalant attitude was somewhat explained when the troops saw the sun rise over the waste of waters after their first night on the rafts, and found that instead of sailing due west to Baku they were heading north-west to Petrovsk.

"We are a lot of silly jossers," said an humble philosopher of the Royal Fusiliers. "Anybody with a grain of sense could ha' seen that we should n't land on the south side of the Cowkysus. We're a-going to Mosky we are, an' it ain't likely we'd stick a lot of bloomin' mountings in the way when we can sail round 'em. There's no flies on Sir George, is there?"

There were no flies on Private Watson either. He had correctly read the Commander-in-Chief's strategy, and at dawn on the following morning he and the rest of the 7th, with some Ghurkas and Bengal infantry, occupied two lively hours in clearing Petrovsk of the few Russian troops who held it.

The work of disembarkation proceeded rapidly. As fast as regiments landed they were hurried forward through the town to occupy a low range of foot-hills through which ran the line to Moscow, Petrovsk being the terminus of that railway on the north of the Caucasian range.

It was well that great energy was shown in the matter, as the Russians, though taken by surprise, bravely strove to remedy their mistake, and it was clear from the rapid concentration of troops that was going on some few miles inland, that a determined assault would be delivered on the British at the earliest possible moment.

It came, hotly enough, during the afternoon.

The Russian general in command at Vladikavkaz hurried up some 20,000 infantry, three sotnias of Cossacks, and fifty guns, and dashed at the English position with great intrepidity.

So severe and determined was the assault that it assumed

the character of a hand-to-hand struggle. Reinforcements were arriving on both sides, but it was far easier for the Russians to hasten up their supports than for the Indian army, with inadequate landing-places, without cranes or steam power on shore, and delayed by the unwieldy nature of the rafts in a shallow harbour abounding in sand-spits—distant also some miles from the scene of the encounter—to strengthen the fighting line.

From the beginning of hostilities the advance division was outnumbered. It suffered terribly from the fact that the Russian guns were unopposed by artillery, and Sir George White, who conducted the defensive operations in person, was devoutly thankful when Colonel Doyne's brigade of cavalry appeared in the rear.

This consisted, it will be remembered, of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 11th Hussars, the 2d Bengal Lancers, and the 13th Bengal Lancers.

The afternoon was well advanced as they came up at the trot, but the blazing sun still rode high in the heavens, and the drifting sand-clouds obscured everything in the front, except that through the murky air occasional puffs of smoke and deep red jets of flame showed where the devastating guns of the enemy were located.

After a weary plod through the sands, Colonel Doyne wisely relegating the pace to a walk, the troopers reached the right of the fighting line.

The sun at last set over the distant hills in a deep crimson glow, but the dust still rising over the scene rendered any intelligible idea of what was going on impossible to the newcomers.

The Royal Fusiliers and the Hampshire Regiment were at this moment bearing the brunt of the attack, both regiments being in extended order, with the 5th Ghurkas and the 2d Bengal Infantry in support.

The Russians kept up a furious cannonade, firing salvoes of six guns with shrapnel, and Colonel Mortimer, of the

Fusiliers, who commanded the fighting line, sent word to Sir George White that he could only hold his position and attack the enemy's skirmishers, whilst an advance was out of the question.

The Commander-in-Chief dispatched an aide-de-camp to acquaint Colonel Doyne with the position of affairs, and to ask him if he thought his brigade could silence the guns.

The cavalry commander answered with a smile : " I will try." He at once gave the necessary orders for the performance of his desperate plan, which was to deliver an unexpected attack upon the enemy's right—this, too, during the uncertainty of darkness, and against unknown odds.

The brigade moved quietly off without attracting Russian notice, and they were soon completely hidden from view by the undulating ground.

With the sudden change peculiar to the region, darkness was now fast setting in, although but little more than an hour previously the sun was visible. The moon rose soon after, and there was something inexpressibly weird in the strange spectacle of the dark mass of men and horses silently advancing through the now almost insupportable dust-clouds, whilst through an occasional rift a bright steel scabbard or glittering curb-chain would gleam for an instant.

Meanwhile the noise and turmoil and lurid blaze of the conflict raging on the left only became more fearful in their intensity.

At last the brigade crossed the intervening ridge, having gained the position desired by Colonel Doyne, and as the dense body of moving cavalry showed against the bright background of moonlit sky and arid earth they were perceived by the enemy.

Directly in front, and about three-quarters of a mile away, were the guns, and as soon as the Russians became aware of the existence of a British force in this new direction, they devoted all their attention to the movement. Twenty guns quickly changed front and shells soon screamed through the

air, shrapnel exploded and sent its missiles tearing and hissing on all sides, whilst the numerous tiny flashes in the enemy's lines, followed by the pinging sound of the bullets, showed that their infantry were at work. Fortunately the Russian aim was high, and the brigade took ground to the right to still further disconcert it. But the advance could no longer be delayed, for by this time Colonel Mortimer must be hard pressed in his difficult position.

As the brigade moved forward, the Russian artillerymen again saw them, and now the enemy's fire became more fatal, for men and horses began to drop out of the ranks. The cavalry advanced in echelon from the left, preceded by the 2d Bengal Lancers, and under cover of these, the 4th Dragoon Guards and the 11th Hussars formed to deliver their charge with the 13th Bengal Lancers in support.

Colonel J. J. S. Chisholme, of the Hussars, late of the 5th Lancers, the brigade-major, passed the thrilling words along the line :

“The cavalry are to charge those guns.”

As this order was repeated from squadron to squadron, these gallant soldiers straightened their stalwart figures in the saddle, and set their teeth hard, as they looked at the seething cauldron of fire and smoke into which they were shortly to plunge. Even the very horses felt that some desperate deed was imminent, for they pawed impatiently and clanked their accoutrements in the wild desire to be moving. Fatigue, hunger, and thirst vanished to the winds.

If there came to that band memories of home and friends they were banished by the proud consciousness that the honour of England was intrusted to their keeping at that supreme moment. Each man knew that the lives of his struggling countrymen in the main body depended upon his success, and he thought with rage of the dear comrade who, five minutes ago, was riding carelessly by his side, but who now lay rolling in the agonies of death upon Russian soil.

Captain Adams, of the Hussars, was adjusting the chin-strap of his helmet when a voice behind him said :

“ It ’s a warm shop here, sir ! ”

Turning in his saddle, he saw his soldier servant—a sturdy Yorkshireman named Boland, who hailed from his own parish—grinning at him from the front rank of the troop.

“ You here, Boland ? ” said the Captain sternly, for his faithful comrade was supposed to be sick in hospital from a slight attack of fever. “ You had no business to be on parade to-night.”

“ No business, sir ! Do you think I would stop behind when the regiment was going into action ? Lor’ bless you, sir, no fear ? ”

This reply was unanswerable, and now everyone felt that the period of waiting had passed, for Colonel Doyne rode rapidly to the front of the brigade.

The shot and shell were falling fast on all sides. It was a curiously helpless sensation to be so hotly fired at in the dark. Two officers in the 2d Bengal Lancers instinctively reined their horses close together whilst they exchanged a friendly hand pressure.

“ Hope to meet you at the mess to-night,” said one.

“ Same to you, old chap, and a Happy New Year when it comes,” was the cool response.

Then Colonel Doyne’s voice rang out clearly through the gloom :

“ Now we have them ! Trot—gallop—charge ! ”

The last word electrified every pulse like a galvanic shock.

Away dashed the host of men and horses, right into the teeth of the leaden hailstorm, amidst dust, and smoke, and spurts of bright fire. Their path lay straight ahead, and they followed a guide in the brigadier who would only falter when laid low by the enemy.

A brief but maddening rush through the whizzing bullets and terrific sand-clouds raised by the galloping hoofs, and they were among the Russians. Like a living steam-hammer

they pounded down upon the molten group of guns and men, rendered fiery by the flame of the last terrible volley which sought to check the impact of the British troopers.

But the effort was in vain. The long bright sabres flashed in the air as they dealt death to the struggling artillerymen, and the powerful horses crushed irresistibly through the wavering infantry which lay beyond the guns. Doyne's horse was shot under him, but, mounting another that was riderless, he still led the van as they swept the enemy off the field, for the Russians forthwith abandoned guns and position.

Captain Adams had cut down two of a group of stubborn gunners, who seemed to prefer death to an ignominious flight, when he suddenly saw Boland hard pressed by a trio of Cossacks, one of whom was an officer. He spurred hard to get alongside the youngster in time, but he was too late, for the Cossack officer wheeled his horse to the rear and stabbed the brave Yorkshireman in the back.

With a frenzied yell Captain Adams galloped up and gave the cowardly Russian such a hearty blow that he nearly severed the man's head from his body. The others made off at top speed.

Boland had fallen from his horse, and Adams, hastily dismounting, bent over his prostrate figure.

"My poor boy, are you much hurt?" he asked, with keen anxiety in his voice, for Boland was born on his own estate, and could not be gainsaid from following the squire's son into the Hussars.

"Yes, sir. It's all over with me, I'm afraid," was the feeble response. "That beggar's sword passed through my back and came out at my right breast."

"You must not despair, Boland," said the officer, though the words almost choked him. "The ambulance will soon be here, and with care you'll get set up again."

"There's no chance of that, Captain. I'm done for. But I saw you drop him, an' it served him right. Oh, I'm dyin'."

For a moment it seemed as though he had breathed his last, but Adams found that his heart was still beating, and he remembered that he had a small flask of brandy in his sabretache.

He poured some of the liquor into Boland's mouth, and its influence revived him for a moment, but it was too evident that he was sinking fast.

In a short space he began to talk again, and his words reverted to the familiar tongue used in his Yorkshire home, such as he knew long before he was drilled and smartened into being a spruce cavalryman.

"Captain," he said, "ye 'll leuk after t' puir awd mother, A knöa, for she 's nöabody left to care for her now !"

"God knows I will if I am spared," was Adams's earnest answer.

"Ye 'll be spared right eneuf, sir," said Boland weakly. "Tak' ma word for 't."

Adams could not answer him, for the tears were in his eyes, but the dying Hussar went on :

"And Captain."

"Yes," answered Adams.

"Tell 'em, when you reach t' awd country, that A died like a true Yorkshireman, one of t' right söart, and that afore A dropped A 'd fixed four of 'em."

"Yes, yes, my lad, you will not be forgotten."

"Thank you, Captain. Remember—poor—awd—mother, and may God—bless her—and you—and all t' föaks at höam. Oh ! Captain, it 's over. Good-bye. If A could see t' little plëace—once more—it 'ud be easier."

As he uttered the last words the young Hussar raised his head and shoulders with a spasmodic effort, and then fell back upon the sand. His features relaxed from their drawn fixity. A smile came over them. He had added one more name to the glorious death-roll of England's brave soldiers.

When Adams regained his troop the battle was at an end,

and the remainder of the disembarkation was effected quietly and uninterruptedly.

Whereupon "Admiral" Rodney steamed off again to Uzun Ada, towing his rafts in order to bring across the rest of the Indian army in two sections.

This duty he accomplished in five days, and he then left his warrant officers to carry on the work of forwarding stores to the base at Petrovsk, whilst he made haste to reach headquarters, which by this time were located at Vladikavkaz. Rostoff, on the Moscow line, was already in British hands, as two strong expeditions from England, commanded respectively by Lord Methuen and Sir Charles Warren, had seized the whole northern littoral of the Black Sea. With the army of the Caucasus safely locked up behind the impenetrable barrier of snow-clad mountains, it was but a matter of a few days for the railway to be repaired, where it had been destroyed by the Russians, and for Sir George White to meet Lord Methuen.

England had now nearly 400,000 men in European Russia.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“À PARIS !”

SOME weeks elapsed before there was any severe fighting in France, after the tremendous events of June 2d, 3d, and 4th, in the environs of Rouen and Yvetot.

The French Government found it increasingly difficult to lay hands upon the subsidiary millions of men who always figure so largely in statistical enumerations of the Continental armies on the war footing. By this time the great mass of the people were utterly sick of a struggle which was clearly destined to bring nothing in its train, save personal loss and national humiliation.

But Paris was still France, and Paris was girding her loins for another siege. The military experts laughed at the idea of the threatened British investment of the fortifications. These, roughly speaking, inclose a ring of 125 miles, and to besiege Paris upon the lines adopted by the Germans in 1870, would require an armed force strong enough to resist sorties at every point of a circle measuring 130 miles along its inner circumference. Although England, Canada, South Africa, and Australia had succeeded in lodging nearly a million of men upon French soil, it was obvious that for even this large force there was little hope of a successful attack upon the capital.

The total troops at Lord Roberts's disposal—it must not be forgotten that Sir Redvers Buller's Southern French Expedition would not be available for many weeks, even if entirely successful in the march through France—would barely suffice to encircle Paris with a line of men in double

rank. Not, of course, that any such procedure would be necessary or possible, but the simple statement of fact demonstrates how difficult it would be to dispose the beleaguering corps in such manner as would enable them to check a determined assault delivered unexpectedly by the enemy in any definite locality.

Common sense at last began to prevail in the deliberations of the allies' Council of War. It was strongly urged, and not too hotly controverted, that the British army was invincible in the field, and that the most damaging tactics which could be employed against it was for the French to post themselves impreguably behind their *ceinture* of forts, and allow the English to spend their resources in vain upon the tremendous task of subduing Paris.

General Saussier himself saw the wisdom of this course, and he finally yielded to it, only stipulating that a well-equipped army of 100,000 men should lie in the path of the British advance from Rouen, and delay and hamper their progress in every possible way without engaging in operations upon a grand scale.

Above and beyond every other achievement, the duty of this Corps of Observation was to destroy roads and railways as it retired. Meanwhile it had to harass and annoy Lord Roberts to the utmost extent.

The scheme was sound enough in scope, but it counted upon one element which had, so far, been signally absent from the French plan of operations—Lord Roberts had a way of making his own arrangements, and his ideas had never hitherto coincided with those of the French leaders.

So he quietly detailed General Alleyne's division to keep the Observation Corps fully employed some ten miles beyond Rouen, while he personally devoted every energy to the concentration of troops and stores at this centre. Transport was, above all else, imperatively needed in abundance, and when the railway lines in the British rear got beyond the control of the limited staff available in the ranks of the army,

the Commander-in-Chief asked the London and North-Western Railway Company to take charge of the working arrangements.

Mr. Frederick Harrison, the general manager of that famous company, assumed personal control of this department, thus utilising what he ingeniously described as his “summer holiday,” and the result was that trains were now run in France as they had never been run before.

Such was the extraordinary attitude of the people towards the conquerors, that quite a brisk passenger traffic was conducted between Havre, Honfleur, and Rouen, and a well-known provincial lawyer summed up the situation by saying: “The English have indeed beaten us, but at last we have got expresses.”

Some weeks passed in active mobilisation before the English Commander-in-Chief felt himself sufficiently prepared to undertake the final rush forward to Paris.

Similar tactics had taken place in Germany, and the smart French papers, in their merciless analysis of events, did not scruple to point the moral for their disconsolate readers.

Thus the *Gil Blas* said: “At the beginning of the war of 1870, Parisians cried ‘*À Berlin !*’ Ere many weeks had passed the Berliners retorted with roars of ‘*À Paris !*’ These English say nothing, but they are coming to both places. However, brave though they be, they will never return. The present generation of Frenchmen have not had time to forget the lessons of the last siege. We have food for years. Our forts are impregnable. We will dance behind our fortifications whilst our enemies die of sheer exhaustion.”

Alleyne’s division lay on the pleasant slopes of the south side of the Seine, with its centre in the quaint village of Pont de l’Arche. Two miles away were the French outposts, and for many days there had been warm but brief passages between the belligerents.

The Commander-in-Chief had ascertained that the country

between this point and Paris was absolutely denuded of troops, and, what was more important, he knew that the railway was not yet destroyed, as the French naturally found it of the utmost convenience in supplying food, ammunition, and reinforcements to their fighting-line. But the French Commander, General de Valois, deeming himself strong enough to retire in good order before an attack in force by the British, had made complete dispositions for blowing up bridges and embankments and derauling the lines at his convenience. He rested secure in the belief that no unforeseen circumstance could prevent the fulfilment of his mission. Any flanking movement by his opponents could not hinder the accomplishment of this portion of his duties, and a direct attack could not be so rapid as to interfere with his calculations.

Lord Roberts thought that it could.

On the night of July 5th—a day passed with less than ordinary excitement at the front—two fine columns, of 10,000 men in each, were drawn up a mile behind the British pickets.

They were led respectively by Brigadier-Generals Sir Frederick Carrington and F. J. Caldecott, and their object was to march, by parallel roads about a mile apart, right through the centre of the French position, and not to halt until they had reached Gaillon, a point eight miles in rear of the French lines.

Fighting, of course, they would have their fill of, but at any cost they must persevere in their advance, and thus act as a human wedge driven through the enemy, and leaving him open to be attacked and beaten in detail at dawn by the troops already *en route* from Rouen for that purpose.

There was no moon, and heavy clouds not only threatened rain, but rendered even the dark hours of a midsummer night oppressive in their impenetrable gloom.

Each officer and man in the columns knew exactly the purport and extent of the operations required from him, Lord

Roberts's object being to secure, undamaged, a big slice of the main line to Paris. The Commander-in-Chief himself met the columns at their rendezvous in the outskirts of Pont de l'Arche, where the railway crosses the Seine to the south side.

Right in front lay the chalk hills strongly held by the French, and behind them the large village of Gaillon, where the French headquarters were situated. Lord Roberts felt that if the comparatively small, but carefully selected expedition, could only succeed in reaching and holding this centre until the culmination of the general attack at daybreak, the remainder of the railway to Vernon and Mantes, and thence to the environs of Paris, would be practically in his possession.

It was a bold stroke, and if matters went even a little to his liking a certain measure of success would be attained, for it would be much to have in his grasp the iron road even to Gaillon, which is nearly eight miles from Havre, and about equidistant from Paris.

The chief difficulty which faced Sir Frederick Carrington and General Caldecott was to keep a straight direction towards Gaillon after the fighting commenced in the broken country.

They were discussing this matter with the chief when Harington, who attended Lord Roberts as aide-de-camp, was suddenly tempted to risk a snub by making a suggestion.

“Could not the drums and bugles be used?” he said.

“What on earth for?” said Lord Roberts.

Harington was sure that he had made an ass of himself, but he persisted bravely:

“Well, sir, it seems to me that once the attack begins the necessity for further concealment disappears. By placing some drums and bugles near the head of each column, accompanied by officers whose sole duty it would be to note the line of march, the men could always tell in which direction to rally after a skirmish.”

The three experienced generals to whom he spoke listened in silence; then the two brigadiers looked at Lord Roberts to learn his opinion.

"It is a mad notion," he said at last; "but mad notions savour of genius in this campaign."

"It will be the most celebrated incident of the war if it comes off," said Sir Frederick Carrington.

"I like it," remarked Caldecott, with a laugh. "It will please the boys and astound the Frenchmen."

The Commander-in-Chief turned sharply round upon Harrington:

"Have you had a letter to-day from that girl, Lady What's-her-name—I mean your sweetheart?"

Harrington blushed down to his boots—or it felt something like it—as he admitted the justice of the Chief's extraordinary suspicion, for Irene was at Havre with her corps of nurses.

"Then, by all the gods of Asia, we'll do it!" cried Lord Roberts. "That young woman brings luck."

And that was how the famous "March of the Drums and Bugles" commenced.

How it ended is a matter of history.

When the advance guards of the columns encountered the French pickets, the latter imagined that a reconnaissance was in progress, and promptly retired upon their supports. On the foot-hills of the range two regiments, the 61st and 117th Chasseurs à Pied, were encamped under arms, and they turned out to drive off the audacious midnight marauders who thus presumed to disturb their rest.

After a lively ten minutes with the 1st Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry and the 2d Battalion of the Buffs, who led Carrington's column on the right, they found that there was unexpected trouble in store for them, and whilst they still strove to delay the advance the commandant hastily dispatched mounted messengers to the rear to warn the reserves.

About a quarter to one o'clock, as the two brigades were steadily breasting the hills, half-a-dozen bright rockets soared into the sky and lit up the landscape for miles around. They contained powerful illuminants expressly designed for the purpose of disclosing an enemy's whereabouts at night and in their momentary radiance the full scope of the British attack was made clear to the French staff.

Hardly had the glare died out of the sky before there came to the ears of the astounded Frenchmen—loud above the rattle of musketry and the cries of the combatants—the measured boom of a big drum, played with all the energy of the drummer of the Buffs, followed by the quick rat-tat of the kettledrums beating a lively step.

Then the bugles rang out with triumphant clang, and for the next two hours relays of bandsmen kept up that never-to-be-forgotten roudade, with its far-sounding notes of simple but warlike music.

The French gathered round the columns like flies, but were swept aside as though a hurricane had burst upon them. Up the slope of the mountainous barrier, over its crest, and down the reverse marched the irresistible forces of England, never halting or faltering for a moment, suffering grievously, but inflicting much greater loss upon the enemy, driving their way through the French position with a cool and jubilant courage which dismayed and unnerved their opponents.

Amidst the wild uncertainty of fighting, the French leaders still strove to beat back this storm-cloud which seemed to travel along a predestined and cyclonic path.

General de Valois, roused from a brief slumber, came to the front on an engine with the chief members of his staff, their chargers being hastily crowded into a horse-box behind.

When they reached the neighbourhood of the fight—Sir Frederick Carrington's column being much nearer than they guessed—they rode furiously forward to ascertain definitely what was in progress.

As they neared the fighting-line, with its chaotic surging of bewildered troops and its mounted officers galloping madly to and fro, a new and wild fanfare of bugles and drums came to them on the breeze, for the big drum of the Buffs had been burst by a Lebel bullet, and the incident had been seized to relieve the breathless bandsmen with a fresh set.

"What deviltry is this?" cried De Valois. "Is there a fête going on, then?" and he spurred ahead more eagerly.

"The Englishmen are amusing themselves with us as usual," muttered a young aide-de-camp to himself.

At this moment some wooden outbuildings of a farmhouse flamed forth in rapid blaze. They had been fired by the command of a French colonel, who hoped by this means to fix a rallying-point for his own men, and give them some guidance in a last desperate attempt to hurl back their assailants.

Into the zone of flickering light came the Highland Light Infantry, who were received with such a storm of lead that their colonel ordered them to halt and lie down for a few minutes.

Still shrilly dominating the crackling reports of the rifle duel the bugles blew their cheerful strains, and the rattle of the drums kept up undaunted beat.

"'Strewth!" said a crouching Tommy to his front-rank man. "They 're playin' a bit of the revally. An' it 's a nice summer mornin', ain't it?" he added, as a bullet knocked his helmet off.

The cause of the brief delay soon became apparent. Two flanking parties of Buffs had swept round the French position unobserved, and were now attacking the defenders with the bayonet. The Highland Light Infantry charged in front, when the diversion thus created gave an opportunity. General de Valois was knocked off his horse, his staff shot or captured, and before the driver of the "special" knew what was the matter, he was nearly rammed into the fire-box by an enthusiastic Clyde engineer.

General Caldecott's column was equally fortunate on the left. They came across the field telegraph line, which they promptly cut, and at 3 a.m. the first intimation received by the inhabitants of Gaillon of the proceedings among the chalk hills was given by the now wavering notes and unsteady beats of bugles and drums marching through the village street.

Meeting here, Sir Frederick Carrington and General Caldecott exchanged a hasty hand grip, and at once took steps to render their victory complete.

A train was got together and ordered to proceed cautiously to Vernon, whither it would be followed by a second and a third, whilst reinforcements would be sent by road as speedily as might be.

Caldecott's column now retraced its steps along the line towards the French position, to safeguard it from attempts at destruction by isolated parties from the French right and left.

The precaution was wise but needless.

The whole of the French army was now subjected to a bitter attack by a superior force, and the growing daylight showed that they had been hopelessly scattered over a wide expanse of country. Pursuit was kept up by cavalry all day, as Lord Roberts was determined to prevent anything in the nature of concentration of small brigades. He wanted to have his hands free for the march to Paris.

On the second morning after the battle, the country being now fairly clear after the desultory fighting that had gone on for many hours, scouting parties of fresh cavalry and cyclists were formed for the purpose of thoroughly exploring the valley of the Epte and the Plaine de Saint André.

Among these the Catford Cyclist Corps was prominent, and at their head was William Briggs, less stout and more soldierly than when we last saw him at the "Cat and Anchor."

War, with its tremendous significance to the individual,

moulds a man's character with compelling touches, and Briggs was quieter, more self-contained, more serious in demeanour, after these few weeks of momentous campaigning.

There was little trace of the old-time bombast in the manner in which he gave orders to his followers. In one respect alone did his wonted weakness for display manifest itself. Big and heavy in his proportions, he was yet the fastest rider of them all, and it was with loving care that he inflated the tires of his "bike" that morning preparatory to the long ride before him.

For twenty miles the party passed through peaceful villages and broad stretches of pasture land and cornfields, in which the peasants were tending their cattle and crops as though the epoch-making events occurring in the locality belonged to another country.

At some little distance from the village of Beuil, where a small bridge in the centre of the hamlet spans the river Eure, the cyclists entered upon a broad, straight road, that above all else suggested a fast "spin."

Four of them at once took the lead, and were separated by a hundred yards from their companions when they raced into the village street, shaded by leafy chestnuts and walnut trees, and seemingly the quietest and most sequestered spot they had yet encountered in their extended reconnaissance.

In an instant the place blazed into sudden life with spluttering rifle-shots, and the screams of frightened women and children.

Briggs' three comrades were shot dead, and he himself only escaped a similar fate by a heavy fall over a kerbstone, which momentarily rendered him incapable of movement.

The remainder of the detachment pulled up and strove to make some show against the company of Zouaves they had so suddenly encountered. But the affair was hopeless from the outset. Barely a third of the party succeeded in racing off again, and many of them were wounded.

When Briggs recovered his breath he found himself surrounded by a group of soldiers, who surveyed him with grim curiosity, and an officer at once addressed him in French.

Briggs had managed to pick up a few words of the language, but he was quite unable to follow the rapid utterance of his questioner, whereupon the Frenchman used some English words :

“ Spy. Shoot you, is it not, in three minutes ! ”

“ I am no spy,” replied Briggs calmly, though his heart throbbed tumultuously as he looked at the officer’s stern face.

“ I am a scout. *Vous savez. C’est proper dang la guerre.* ”

Again the Frenchman became voluble, but he apparently addressed some questions to Briggs, who wholly failed to understand him. Someone was sent for, and a young soldier appeared, who spoke English perfectly.

“ The officer says,” he told Briggs, “ that he can shoot you as a spy—just now, this moment. And he will do this thing except on one condition. If you tell him truly the present position of your army, and its line of march, with the strength of the leading divisions, he will grant you your life.”

Briggs rose to his feet and looked proudly about him, for he was taller by inches than any of the Zouaves. “ It is your officer, then, who would indeed make me a spy ? ” he said.

The Frenchman flushed, and the officer did not wait for the translation, for he had caught the drift of the words. He impatiently gave some orders, and the Englishman was placed with his back against the gable end of a house, whilst eight men drew up in single rank at ten paces distance and shouldered their Lebel rifles.

It was a fine midsummer afternoon, bright but tempered with a cool breeze—just such a day, thought Briggs, as rendered the Ripley road an earthly paradise—and it was hard for a man in the prime of life and the plenitude of his strength to be shot down like a mad dog to gratify the mere

lust for slaughter. He well knew that the usages of honourable warfare did not sanction his death under such circumstances, and the keen agony of these last moments was rendered more bitter by the knowledge that he could personally overcome any four of his captors had they no other arms than those provided by Nature.

A fierce impulse seized him to rush upon them and surrender his life in desperate barter, but the succeeding thought showed him that the nobler way to die was with the dignified demeanour of a soldier who gave all for his country.

Again the young interpreter approached.

"The excellent captain gives you a final chance," he explained. "There is no dishonour in giving information which will be easily obtained before to-morrow. Will you, for the last time, tell him what he has asked you? Why don't you lie, you fool?" he added quickly, in an undertone.

Briggs looked at him with the glistening eyes of a hunted animal, but his thoughts were far away amidst the pleasant lanes of Kent, where his wife and little ones lived in a creeper-covered cottage during the summer months. Anon his memory strayed to the bar-parlour of the inn at Catford where his voice was the loudest and his laugh the heartiest during the nightly gathering.

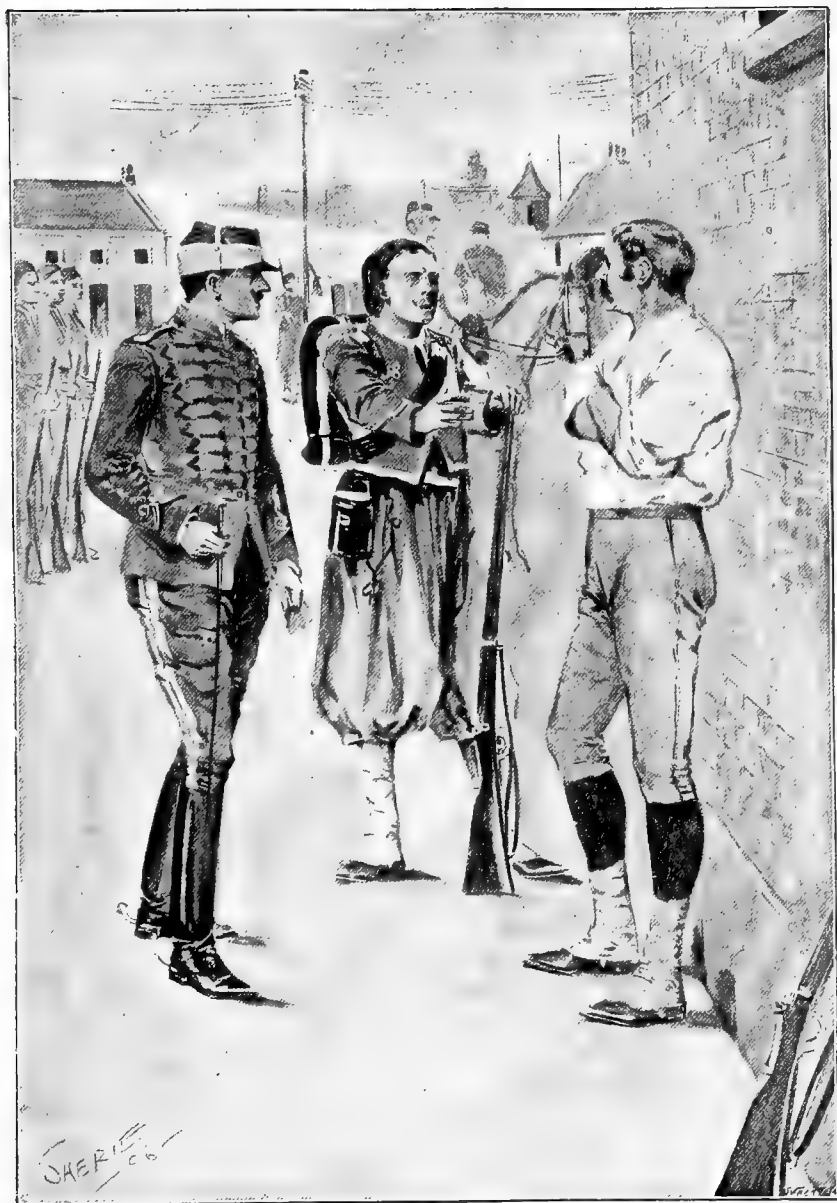
"Will you not answer?" came the sharp query, whilst the Zouave left his side and the officer raised his sword.

"Yes," cried Briggs. "Tell him——" Then he remembered, perhaps, the translator would not gratify his wish. "*Ecoutez-vous, soldats Français,*" he said in loud and clear tones. "*La Hongletaïre est la première nation de la monde!*"

There was an appreciable pause, and the firing-party stood at the ready.

"*Sacrebleu,*" growled one of the men. "*C'est vrai!*"

"*Pour la dernière fois,*" cried the officer. "*Repondez-vous?*"



"THE EXCELLENT CAPTAIN GIVES YOU A FINAL CHANCE."

Trees, sky, and houses began to dance madly before the Englishman's eyes, but he shouted again, so vehemently that he was heard far down the village street : “ *La Hongletaire est la première—*”

But he stopped, for out of the gathering mist in which all things were fast merging, there loomed in front of him the figure of the officer, who placed his hand upon his shoulder and spoke to him in kindly tones.

Briggs slowly regained his senses, and saw that the Zouaves had dropped their rifles.

He turned with amazement to the young soldier who had previously addressed him, and the latter explained : “ We Frenchmen do not commit murder,” he said. “ The officer did but try you to the end. He wishes you to rejoin your army.”

And the officer himself, shaking Briggs vigorously by the hand, exclaimed : “ *Vous êtes brav' homme, m'sieur. Votre chemin est par là,*” and he pointed along the road to Vernon.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE END OF THE ROMANOFFS.

“ **H**AS he come yet ? ”

“ No, Petrof, have a little patience. The Little Father won't keep you long.”

“ Ah ! No ! Not long ! Not long—now ! But it has been weary waiting.”

“ By the Prophet, we are impatient this morning. Here, come a little more to the front. You won't be so crushed. And why so anxious ? ”

“ Don't you know ? Are your eyes closed ; are your ears heavy ? It is a bitter day for our Little Father. Yes. The Romanoffs are nearly run to earth. A few hours longer—a few hours ! ”

“ Hey ? What do you mean, Petrof ? ”

“ Silence, there ! ”

And with this gruff command there fell on the shoulders of the lusty moujik who asked the question a blow from the shaft of a lance. A mounted soldier passing along, vainly seeking to maintain order, had overheard them. The little group scowled as he rode on and looked at each other with meaning glances.

The streets of Moscow were crowded with eager throngs. The Tsar was about to enter. Everyone knew that : the word had been passed round mysteriously in the morning. He had suddenly left St. Petersburg, alarmed at the news of growing calamity, and had hastened down to the old capital to meet his brother, and thrown himself into the centre of operations. The whole city was in a ferment of excitement.

For news of late had been amazing, stupendous. Scarcely had the terrible announcement come that the English had beaten the Asian army and had forced its way to Russian soil, than another and still more miraculous event convulsed the whole nation.

Seven days after the remarkable meeting at the Grand Duke Paul's house, the storm that had been so slowly gathering within the Russian dominions, gained head, and burst with impetuous fury upon the crown. The Nihilists had risen, not in isolated localities, not with the ineffectual despair of scanty numbers, but simultaneously, multitudinously, in a single moment, and in every quarter.

The first tidings that came to St. Petersburg were sufficiently embarrassing. They announced the revolt of the southern provinces. With ready firmness and dispatch that danger, at least, might be effectually crushed; but scarcely had General Gourko time to make his first hasty arrangements, than fresh intelligence of disaster, growing worse and worse every moment, rained in upon him from all points. It staggered and confused him, for he found that he had at last to contend, not with a conspiracy, but with a nation.

Count Lucovitch had planned his operations well. Whilst the whole available Russian army was hastening to meet the British in the neighbourhood of Kharkof, and was already engaged, beyond its capacity, with the invincible army of India, a countless host of eager and reckless rebels, resolved to stake everything upon the one decisive blow for their country's freedom, sprang from concealment and hastened in impetuous march—made more triumphant at every step from the easy victories obtained, and the constant reinforcements gathered from the districts through which they passed—to the three chief cities of the empire.

There was little or no resistance; indeed, none was possible. The path of the insurgents was scarcely defended. They were met by blessings rather than by musket-shots, and with incredible rapidity made their way to the seats of

the Imperial Government. It was then that the Tsar, desperate, yet fearless, resolved to throw himself into Moscow, his ancient and sacred capital, the strongest of all his citadels. There, too, summoned hastily together, were gathered the heads of the Romanoff family and one or two of his trusted generals.

Moscow ! Could it be trusted ? 'This holy seat of Muscovite sway, of Russia's glory, of her religion, of her dynasties—proud burial-place of her enemy's ambitions—the hoary witness of countless centuries—Moscow at least might surely stand firm amid the shock of mad revolt, true to king though he be a tyrant, true to law though it be a mockery, true to oath though it be twice forsworn !

Until long past noon wild rumours had rushed along the main thoroughfares, and the ever-swelling thousands which thronged the more prominent public places eagerly discussed the many incredible reports which spoke of the overthrow of their Tsar's dominion.

At last, about five o'clock, the gleam of arms in the distance betokened the arrival of the Imperial party at the railway station. A sudden hush came over the excited multitude. The Tsar rode at the head of his guards, accompanied by Gourko. His look was still haughty, and there was in it a strange expression of mingled anxiety and disdain. How would his capital receive him ? This torturing thought filled him with distraction.

As he rode slowly through the crowded streets, it was ominous to notice that there was no clamour of welcome, none of that popular enthusiasm which greets a ruler who comes amongst his people. His city of Moscow gazed upon the Imperial cavalcade in sullen silence, broken only by the low murmuring of subdued voices. The Tsar's brow darkened as he marked this significant fact, and his eye glittered with the fierce fire of royal anger.

"These dogs need whipping to their kennels," he exclaimed to Gourko.



"AS THE TSAR RODE SLOWLY THROUGH THE CROWDED STREETS."

"Pray Heaven the day is near when your Majesty may be able to punish them for their impious disloyalty," replied the Minister, whose mind was heavy with foreboding. "Meanwhile pardon an old servant's license, when I earnestly recommend Your Majesty to humour these cowards. We must take no wrong step just now. If Your Majesty would deign not to notice——"

"There shall be no more submission or pretence," hastily interjected the Tsar. "The Romanoffs are not accustomed to play-act before their subjects. I will be monarch to the end. Our destiny is set by Heaven, and Heaven alone can accomplish it. What news from the north?"

Gourko's voice trembled slightly as he replied :

"St. Petersburg is surrounded, sire. But that alone I would not fear. Danger from without may be met with ease. But——"

"You hesitate ! What is it you suspect ?"

"This, Your Majesty. That the city itself may rise. There is disaffection through every rank. Should it have spread to the garrison we must be prepared for bad news indeed."

"And the south ?"

"That," replied Gourko, "is for the present not to be counted on. The Nihilists have swarmed over every province, and the Black Sea is no longer in our hands."

"In that case," exclaimed the Tsar, with defiant pride, "we must depend upon ourselves. My forefathers had dangers like these to face, and in the hour of peril proved themselves kings. You will not find me unworthy of them, General. Let us ride on to the palace. We will prepare a blow that shall chill the very heart of rebellion and secure for ever the dominion of my race !"

They were now passing along the large public square in the centre of the city. The dense throng on either side their path pressed disorderly upon them and progress became slow and difficult. The intermittent growling that rumbled

through the spectators reached the Tsar's ears and he spurred his horse on in anger.

At the same time his guards rode forward on either side to keep off the press, and beat the people back with their sabres. At this act of wanton cruelty a hoarse roar went up mingled with hisses and shouts of disloyalty. The spirit of the citizens, too long repressed, sought a vent, and in a moment a sullen crowd threatened to become a dangerous mob.

"Down with the Tsar!" suddenly cried someone who was standing in the front line. It was like a spark setting gunpowder ablaze. Curses and cries of hatred beset the royal ears. The people of Moscow had spoken at last.

The Tsar reined in his horse. Gourko placed his hand upon his sovereign's arm, but it was roughly shaken off.

Turning round, the Tsar beckoned towards him Pochowski, who still fulfilled his duties as captain of the royal guard. And this in no treacherous spirit. The Nihilist leaders feared the extremities to which fury might drive their fanatical armies. The Tsar, at least, must be safeguarded from their violence.

Pale with rage Nicholas pointed to the clamorous bystanders.

"Captain!" he commanded. "Fire on this rabble."

Pochowski started and changed colour.

"Your Majesty——" he commenced.

"What, sir! Do you attempt to argue?" shouted the Tsar.

"But, sire," stammered the confused officer. "I dare not fire, for Your Majesty's sake. Such an act would excite them to a riot. Your life would be endangered."

"You dare to disobey me?" cried Alexander. "You may consider yourself under arrest. Slivinski," he went on, turning to the officer next in command, "I place you in authority. Do my bidding."

Slivinski coloured and hesitated.

"I agree with Captain Pochowski," he faltered.

"Enough," cried the enraged sovereign. "I have no longer even a faithful bodyguard, then ! Silence, sir ! " he exclaimed as he saw Slivinski was about to make some deprecatory explanation. "You have chosen your time well. Gourko, let us go on to the palace."

So saying, the two dashed off rapidly in the direction of the Kremlin, the crowd parting to let them pass. Slowly and ashamed the Royal Guard halted, with the two disgraced officers at their head.

Within a few minutes the news of this outburst flew through the streets like wildfire, and the most violent excitement prevailed. A rush was made to the great square, and here the dense crowd swayed and seethed with the passion of turbulent fury. Moscow, runs the saying, is a kitten when it is at play, but a tiger when it is aroused. And now the great city abandoned itself to all the tempestuous fury of ungovernable revolt. There was no longer any attempt at concealment. From every nook and cranny crept forth the hunted Nihilist, the terrible minister of destruction, pest and patriot, the reformer aflame with generous purpose, and the vile assassin athirst for blood. All that was good and all that was bad blended in this surging multitude of men.

Pochowski saw it and trembled. It was becoming a tempest that he could not direct. To what terrible lengths might not this passionate community proceed, if once it abandoned itself to its fury ? The revolution he aimed at might become nothing less than a new Reign of Terror, a tornado of destruction and unbridled license. It would make the patriot's deed accursed.

He flung himself amongst the uproarious people. He appealed to them to remain orderly.

"Men of Russia," he said passionately, "we must be united or we shall lose all. Our brothers without are completing the great plan; let us hear from them first. It becomes us to see that no stain rests upon our noble work.

We get our victory twice over if we get it without bloodshed. All is well so far. Moscow is true to the cause, and it is due to her that she should set an example of dignity and self-control to the rest of the empire."

His words, heard by but a few amid the deafening roar, were little heeded. Some temperate citizens attempted to aid him in calming the passions of the constantly increasing multitude, but it was a task quite beyond their power.

"Shall we be idle whilst our brethren are at work?" cried one of the orators, who were by this time haranguing the crowds in every direction. "We have the fox safe in our power, and shall we let him escape?"

"Down with the Tsar," cried a thousand voices, as the speaker stretched out his hand to the ancient palace of the Muscovite kings, and a great roar of assent went up.

The passions of the people were inflamed to a still more violent pitch by a small body of the Royal troops, who, hearing these cries of disloyalty, and fearing for their master, had issued from the Kremlin and charged into the vast crowd with the mad hope of dispersing them. With a howl of rage, the people flung themselves fiercely upon their assailants. The latter, though armed, could do nothing against this resistless torrent of humanity, who in frightful earnestness beset the little company of soldiers, tearing the men from their horses, attacking them with every weapon that lay to their hand, and splitting them up into sundered atoms, which were entirely at the mercy of a merciless and howling multitude.

Pochowski saw these things and shuddered. The wild beast was already loose. He looked anxiously at his watch. Already three hours had passed by, and there was no news. But what would happen when it *did* come? Moscow was as a mad dog. Success would only goad her into new violence and unutterable outrage.

He gave a few hurried directions to the soldiers in attendance on him, and dashed off to the scene of this sickening

conflict. As he did so, he perceived a single horseman making off along the square, evidently in the direction of the Tverskaga Zastava.

"A Royal messenger!" he exclaimed. "The Tsar must have had news. Is it well or ill?"

His question was destined to be speedily answered. The crowd also seeing the orderly, who was evidently seeking to evade notice, suddenly turned upon him with a shout.

"He bears dispatches!" shouted someone, and in a second he was dragged off his horse, and held violently struggling on the ground. A dozen hands searched him—nor vainly. A sealed packet, snatched from his tunic, was held triumphantly aloft amid screams of exultation.

"Read it aloud," came the shout. "Mount the pedestal. Let us hear what he is doing to destroy us."

In obedience, the fortunate citizen thus raised to distinction, got upon the base of the Miniv Monument, and tore open the dispatch. As he read it, the joy that illumined his face betrayed the character of the news.

"Friends," he shouted, "Russia once more is free. St. Petersburg has fallen. This morning she is in the hands of the Nihilists. The flag of the Republic waves from the Winter Palace. The reign of the Romanoffs is over."

He would have proceeded, but his voice was drowned in the vociferous shouting that beat through the Red Square like the thunder of the waves upon the sea. There was no restraint now. St. Petersburg was calling upon Moscow, and Moscow would not be found wanting.

Riot ran wanton through the streets. With the rough reason that animates a multitude when success welds its strange fragments into the semblance of unity, it split itself into several divisions and made for the different gates of the city, fearful that an attempt to escape might be made by the royal party. A rush was made to the entrances of the Kremlin, but the huge fortress palace defied such amateur bombardment, and Pochowski only smiled grimly when he

saw the dissipation of energy which, after all, might but prove the Tsar's salvation.

His own little troop of soldiers he dispatched to take observations and keep him informed of what went on whilst he dashed off past the Church of St. Basil in the direction of the Red Gate.

As he swept round the great cathedral, a young officer met him and saluted.

"Ah, Prenskovitch," he exclaimed, "you bring news."

"Yes," answered the lieutenant. "You have heard that St. Petersburg is in our hands."

"What else?" asked Pochowski, anxiously.

"The British and the United States fleets are in the Neva. The forts are already being bombarded."

Pochowski paused, clearly troubled by the intelligence.

"There will be no landing for the present, I suppose?" he asked.

"I think not," was the reply. "The forts are holding out and are well garrisoned. News has also come that the British are engaging us to-day at Kharkof. It is mere rumour, but I fancy that it is true. Perchance the battle is now over."

"If so," said Pochowski reflectively, "the fate of Russia will be decided. There will not be a second battle. Meanwhile what of the Tsar. I presume you learnt this within?"

"Yes, captain," replied Prenskovitch. "The Kremlin is put in readiness for a siege. The Tsar and his family are in council in St. George's Hall. His advisers are with him, and also the generals who have remained on his staff."

"The Romanoffs are at their last council!" said Pochowski bitterly. "Do you know to what conclusion they have come?"

"The Tsar awaits the issue of the day at Kharkof," replied Prenskovitch. "He intends to collect an army to invest St. Petersburg. For the present he will wait events in the south."

Pochowski smiled grimly and pointed to the cathedral. From one of its minarets waved a flag of quite new design. It was the white and red banner of the revolution.

"It is well he waits," he said. "The empire is already departed. Let us salute the youngest of republics!" And the stern agitator, with real emotion, raised his sword in military fashion in salutation of the fluttering silk.

Dismissing Prenskovitch, Pochowski rode on to the Red Gate. On his way he saw signs of the energy and determination of the people of Moscow. The whole town was in their possession. Here and there a small knot of soldiers had endeavoured to make a stand, but they had been ruthlessly cut down by the infuriated mob. From most of the public buildings flew the flag of the revolution, in all kinds of material, shape, and tint, as eager hands had contrived it. Evening had approached, and the city had become calm, for there was no longer any resistance to this new and terrible power that stirred fiercely within the breast of the great Russian people.

Yes, Russia was at last free. Pochowski, as he rode along, felt his heart glow with the consciousness of the great, the noble, task he had that day seen completed.

His country had wrested itself from the tyrant's grasp with scarce an effort; nay, more than this, the path of the revolution was almost unstained by blood.

Those dark, cruel forces he feared so much, the fierce spirits whose cunning brutality had made his cause so hated by those who did not understand it, had made no definite movement. The Tsar was safe in his royal palace—in honourable durance—and the republic would burst upon the world in all the glory of unsullied innocence.

Pochowski might well rejoice, for his life's mission was consummated. He was close to the Red Gate when his eye fell upon the figure of a man creeping cautiously along in the shadows, as if anxious to escape observation. Something in his appearance and manner caused Pochowski's

heart to throb with a strange sensation of terror and foreboding, for he recognised in him one of the daring leaders of that most desperate band, the Nihilists of Moscow, whose sleepless hatred of authority had invented a thousand deeds of outrage to sully almost beyond redemption the cause of liberty in Russia.

Springing from his charger he rushed upon his dread associate, gripped him by the throat and pinned him with his back against the wall.

"There is some deviltry a-foot," he cried. "Why are you here? Tell me the truth or I will stretch you lifeless where you stand."

The eyes of the stranger cowered before his stern gaze. "There is nothing. Believe me," he stammered.

"Liar!" shouted Pochowski, tearing a document from an inner pocket of the man's coat.

Scorning the shrinking form beside him, he hastily opened the paper and read its contents by the fading light. He started violently, and great beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

"Merciful heaven!" he exclaimed, "shall I be in time?" An instant later his horse struck fire from the hard road as he was urged into a headlong gallop.

Dashing through the streets, careless of the straggling groups gathered here and there in animated discussion, with eyes firm set upon the noble outline of that splendid palace of the Tsar which fretted itself in graceful silhouette against the deepening azure of the sky, Pochowski, with a desperate rage in his heart, sped towards the stately gateway which dominates the outer gardens of the Kremlin.

But before he had reached it there came to his ears a dull muttering as of distant thunder, which instantaneously broadened out into a savage crash.

And then, as he gazed horror-stricken, he saw the graceful pinnacle which surmounts the chapel of St. George lurch outwards and fall in reverberating ruin.

This proud triumph of a great architect was now a shapeless mass of *débris*.

Realising too well the unutterable catastrophe that had occurred, he reeled in the saddle with anguish, and grew faint and sick at heart.

“The fiendish deed is done then,” he groaned. “Russia’s grim destiny is too strong for us. Freedom has come, but she has extorted a terrible price !”

At this moment a man darted towards him from the dark shadow of the arch, with eyes aglow in the demoniac gleam of fanatical exultation.

“It is done,” he yelled triumphantly, recognising his leader, “the Romanoffs are no more.”

“Villain,” exclaimed Pochowski, now rendered half mad with impotent fury; “you have slain our cause and you shall perish with it.”

Drawing his sword he hacked at the murderer like a maniac, and not satisfied with the first two terrible blows, he leaped to the ground and did not desist until he had mangled the body beyond recognition.

And thus was Russia re-born, for, a few hours later, came the news that Sir George White’s force had annihilated Kowpatkin’s army at Kharkof.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SORTIE FROM PARIS.

ADHERING inflexibly to his plan of operations throughout the campaign, Lord Roberts marched on Paris by both banks of the Seine. The northern army advanced by way of Meulan and Triel to Herblay, and the southern concentrated at Poissy.

Sorely were the French tempted to break through their self-imposed restraint and attack him in detail, when the great bend of the Seine—where it sweeps round the heights of St. Achères—imposed a formidable obstacle to complete unity of action between the two forces.

In view of the history of subsequent events they would undoubtedly have been well advised in risking much upon a series of determined battles in this locality. They must have inflicted great damage upon the invaders and caused considerable delay, even were they unsuccessful in the main issue. Besides, they had always the formidable *ceinture* of fortifications to fall back upon.

But the heart of France was not in this war. Her soldiers were listless and dispirited, her generals fearful of disastrous consequences.

So the counsels of prudence prevailed, and beyond the constitution of comparatively feeble corps of observation, nothing was done to check the British at the one great point in the advance on Paris where they laid themselves absolutely open to strong assault, without the possibility of either section of the army helping the other.

The result was seen when too late.

When the staid *Journal des Débats* informed the Government that "forts were all very well but fighting was better," Lord Roberts was in possession of St. Germain and Argenteuil, with his gigantic force spread over the intervening ten miles of the Seine valley where it bends due south towards Versailles.

At once there was a fierce outbreak of public opinion in Paris. The dancing behind the fortifications so graphically depicted by the *Gil Blas* was suspended whilst the merry-makers prepared a surprise visit to the Lycée, and the outcome of a savage determination on the part of the authorities to preserve order at all costs was seen in the shooting of many innocent victims in the streets and the execution of several too emphatic patriots.

Something, however, had to be done to allay popular feeling. M. Hanotaux was equal to the occasion.

He issued a flowing manifesto in which he wept in printer's ink over the necessity, paramount as it was in the opinion of military experts, that kept the regular troops inactive behind the vast lines of defence. At all costs these must be held inviolate and impregnable.

"But," he went on, "Frenchmen, citizens of Paris, it shall not be said that the Government restrained you when, panting in your rage, you seek to annihilate the enemy at your gates. It has been decided to form two special sortie columns for immediate service at the front. Citizens desiring to hurl themselves upon the British will give in their names at bureaux established in the different quarters, and preparations will be made for an immediate assault on the hostile lines."

There was a perceptible cooling of collective ardour when this official notification was read and digested.

Fewer speeches were made in the cafés, fewer taunts levelled at the Government in the Press. Henri Rochefort, in *L'Intransigeant*, boldly denounced the scheme. He headed the article: "Another Way of Killing Communards," and

explained whether they were shot in batches by French soldiers at Père Lachaise, or shot in hundreds by the callous British, the end and aim of the authorities was the same—to get rid of the disaffected.

M. Hanotaux smiled as he read, but went on with the arrangements nevertheless, and civilly offered M. Rochefort the colonelcy of one of the newly-raised regiments.

And the editor of *L'Intransigeant*, smiled in his turn, lit a cigarette with the Minister's letter, and wrote another article, saying that the fantastic project might, perhaps, result in teaching the authorities some valuable lessons in strategy.

But the more ardent spirits among the populace were not to be repressed. No less than 50,000 names were enrolled for this special service.

They were hastily mobilised, marched outside Paris, and there armed, whilst the supreme command was given to a crack-brained general whose loud-spoken condemnation of the Council of War, had already nearly led to his imprisonment.

To launch these crazy and ill-formed thunderbolts of tin against the victorious troops of England was a mad notion in itself, were it not in strict pursuance of the policy discovered by MM. Hanotaux and Rochefort.

But De Bossy, the leader, saw nothing outrageous or ludicrous in the scheme. He was fully persuaded that his cohort of enthusiasts, directed by his genius, was capable of clearing a path through the strong British lines, and he no sooner got within striking distance than he hurried forward to the attack.

This was delivered at a peculiar hour, four o'clock in the afternoon, and was heralded by an unexpected artillery movement by the French, who galloped up to close quarters and shelled the British centre, held by Massy's division, as it happened, before their opponents quite realised what was occurring.

Under cover of the momentary confusion thus created De Bossy brought on his two army corps, divided into ten bri-

gades of 5000 men each, and, without paying the slightest regard to reserves or supports, attacked with his whole force along a front extending nearly a mile.

A few minutes after they were first discovered, the leading brigades were close to Massy's outposts; within half-an-hour De Bossy's followers had by sheer weight and uncontrolled audacity forced their way like a gigantic wedge right into the centre of the British position.

Four regiments were cut into ribands in the vain attempt to dam this outrageous torrent of madmen.

Guns were thundered to the front and discharged shrapnel and grape point-blank at the assailants, but they scarce had time to limber up and retreat before the ground they had taken was overrun by the now frenzied French.

De Bossy, who seemed to lead a charmed life, rode at the head of the right attack, and cheered on his men with a courage and buoyancy of spirit that rendered him almost inspired.

For a little while matters looked very serious indeed.

French staff officers, who watched the progress of events from the neighbouring heights, sent off urgent messages for more guns and prompt assistance by trained troops, and by five o'clock there was every indication of a great struggle commencing, which might last all through the night.

But a check now occurred.

Lord Roberts, who had been taking a rest after an exceptionally busy day, when the heavy firing at the front warned him of some unusual development, hastily summoned his staff and rode forward to get definite information.

This no one could give him. But from the summit of a hill he was able to note the method and manner of the assault, and he quickly made up his mind as to the course to be pursued.

"Tell General Massy," he said to an aide-de-camp, "to attack with every available man, and use the bayonet at the earliest possible moment."

Two others he dispatched to Generals Alleyne and Nairn, the one to hurry up his division on the left, the other to fight every available gun under any conditions.

Turning to Harington, he continued : " You go to Sir Drury Lowe, and ask him to charge with 10,000 cavalry on the enemy's left flank within half-an-hour. That is the line of country to be followed by the division," pointing with his sword to an open stretch of meadow land that ran from the British lines and bent towards the French columns. " You had better accompany Sir Drury Lowe and show him the proper direction."

Harington rode two miles in eight minutes, which is good going across country, and found Sir Drury Lowe already busy marshalling his array in anticipation of hasty orders.

There were but 8000 sabres on parade, but the gallant cavalry commander decided to lose no time in trying what these could effect as a preliminary. Giving instructions for a reserve brigade to be constituted, and brought to his assistance, he set off at a sharp canter, and five minutes before the time allotted by the Commander-in-Chief the British horse were sweeping in splendid style along the level belt of grass selected for their passage.

By this time the tumultuous mob of the enemy had been effectually halted.

The 42d Highlanders, the Yorkshire Regiment, the Lincolns, the Durham Light Infantry, the 1st and 4th battalions of the 60th, the 3d battalion of the Rifle Brigade, and many another gallant corps, had flung themselves upon the advancing French, and were now holding them back with the bayonet as a strong swimmer buffets his way against a stream.

Slowly but surely they forged through the struggling mass, whilst the screams of the unfortunate victims who vainly sought to escape, mingled with the exultant yells of their comrades in the rear who pressed on to death in their turn.

The colonel of the 42d, mounted upon a magnificent grey

horse, encountered De Bossy and struck at him with his claymore in such hearty earnest, that the blow broke the Frenchman's sword raised for the parry.

De Bossy lurched from his charger on the offside and was received on the point of a bayonet, whilst a gruff Argyllshire voice roared at him :

“ Ye drivellin' eediot, could ye no fa' like a mon and not like a bag o' meal ? ”

Which was De Bossy's requiem.

When Sir Drury Lowe's division was within striking distance, he did not hesitate a second in divining the true conditions under which to make his cavalry most effective against the disorderly rabble in front.

“ Echelon formation ” and “ fresh points of attack ” were the instructions quickly transmitted to commanding officers and squadron leaders. Then the series of charges commenced.

Liberal interpretation of Lord Roberts's orders, Harington accompanied Sir Drury Lowe in the first rush, at the head of the 17th Lancers.

Practically no attempt was made by the French to beat off the terrible engine of destruction now levelled at them. Lances were slung and swords drawn as being far more deadly under the circumstances, and forthwith the British horsemen began their awful work as though they were cutting down brushwood. Yet, after the first flinching of the human undergrowth, through which they hewed their way, the task became a strenuous one. Desperate, maddened, with the final rage against unavoidable death that renders the tiger so fearsome, the Frenchmen, unable to retreat or go forward, sought to sell their lives dearly.

Harington's charger had his flank ripped open with a bayonet thrust. Frenzied with pain, the noble horse leaped right into the midst of the press, lashed out furiously to clear a way for himself, and then bounded into a fresh group. This time he stumbled, and blundered to his knees, throw-

ing Harington forward on his neck. Whilst striving to recover his seat Teddy felt a heavy crack on his head, the light left his eyes, the sound of conflict died away into nothingness, and he fell from the saddle as one dead.

He had been struck by a clubbed rifle, and would infallibly have been stabbed by his infuriated assailants had not his charger again struck vigorously on all sides with his iron-shod feet.

A rush of Lancers now cleared the locality, and the horse finished the charge with them, receiving no further injuries and trotting back to his quarters when the business was over.

The end came quickly once the constituent elements of the sortie became convinced that death and not glory lay in front.

Neither guns nor reinforcements were needed, for the lava tide of men flowed back towards the fortifications and pursuit only ended when an outlying fort took advantage of the yet clear light of a summer's day to send some shells into Sir Drury Lowe's division.

Horror-stricken, nerveless, voiceless, the Café Brigade, as they were cruelly termed by a French general, literally crawled into safety, and in broken fragments reached Paris by sunrise the following morning.

But they had left 12,000 of their number on the green slopes of the Seine valley. M. Hanotaux mourned contentedly when he heard the news, and M. Rochefort wondered how his deputy colonel had comported himself.

Harington was not missed until the ambulance had long been busy on the battlefield.

Fate controls coincidence at times, and fate ordained that the corps of nurses headed by Irene and Ethel should be on duty with the field hospital staff provided for that day's engagement.

Inured by this time to the dread testimonies of war's unutterable misery, these devoted ladies performed their trying

duties with a thoroughness and care that won the praise of the surgeons, and evoked tremulous gratitude from the pallid lips of the sufferers they tended.

Suddenly there came an orderly riding in hot haste towards the Deputy Surgeon-General, who was engaged in probing for a bullet in the shoulder of a rifle officer.

The two girls happened to be together for a moment, and Irene stopped the man when he would speak to the surgeon.

"Whatever your business, you must wait till the operation is over," she said.

"All right, miss," said the dragoon, saluting; "but I must find somebody to listen to me at once. The Commander-in-Chief wants immediate search to be made for an officer who is a-missing from his staff."

"What is the officer's name?" said Irene, whilst her heart beat painfully, and Ethel looked up from the package of lint she was unfolding.

"Major Harington, miss. Gawd's truth, lady, I did n't know he was a friend of yours!"

The man's ejaculation was natural enough. Irene became deathly pale, and Ethel dropped the parcel in her hands, whilst she gazed, wild-eyed and stupefied, at the messenger.

But Irene was not going to faint at this supreme moment of need.

Her voice was calm as she asked, with an almost supernatural effort of her indomitable will: "Did his lordship give you any idea of Major Harington's whereabouts?"

"Yes, miss," answered the soldier, who was genuinely sorry for the manner in which he had blurted out his sad intelligence. "The Major accompanied Sir Drury Lowe in the cavalry charge along with the 17th Lancers, and it is feared he met with some mishap."

"We must search for him at once," went on Irene, in the same reliant tone. "Tell that party of bearers to come here to me, and see if you can get correct information as to the direction taken by the Lancers."

The dragoon remounted to perform this duty, and Ethel, who now clung helplessly to her friend, moaned through her fast-flowing tears : " Oh, Irene, I must come also."

" No, dearest," was the firm reply. " We cannot both desert our duties. This is my task, and mine only. Your work lies here. Bear up, my darling, or my heart will break too soon."

Ethel Harington felt, even in the midst of her grief, that Irene's was the more pitiable state, and she strove hard to comfort her with words of hope.

As the orderly approached with the ambulance bearers, he inquired from one of the men as to Irene's identity.

" That 's Lady Vyne, and the other is Miss Harington," was the answer.

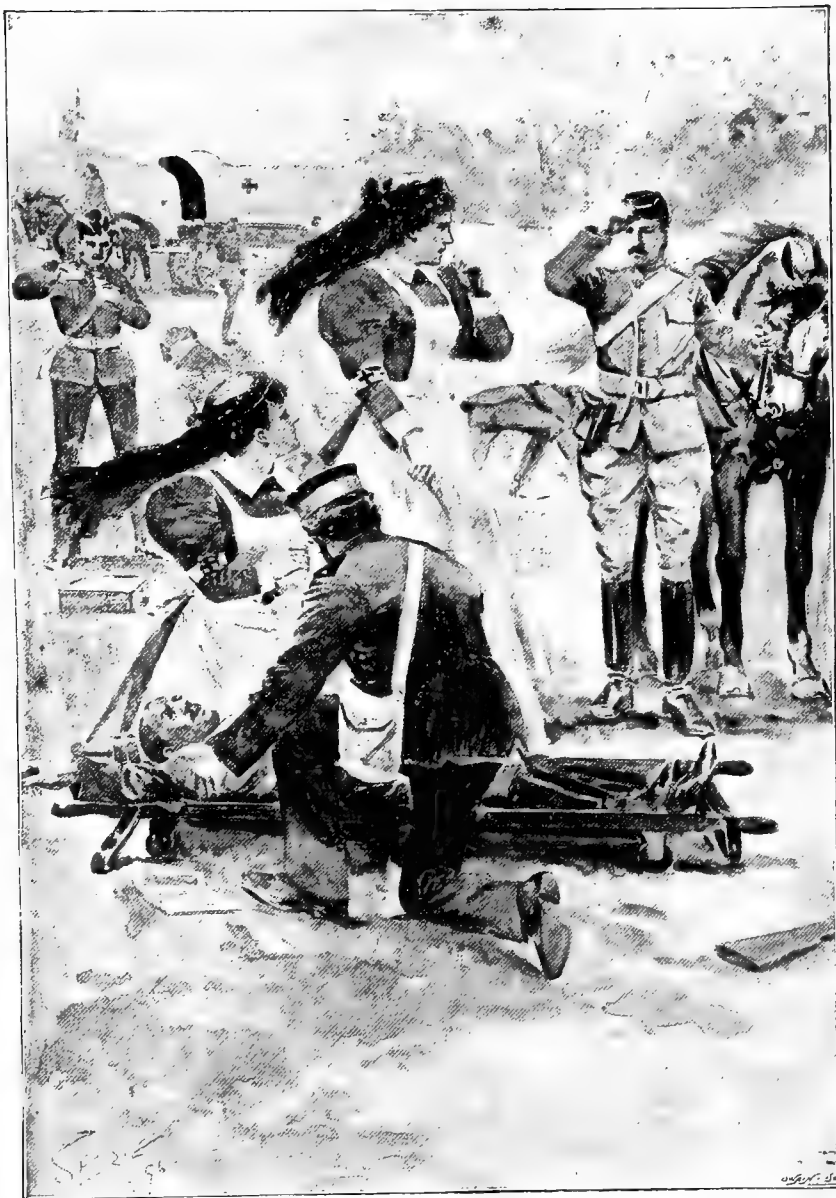
" Phew !" whistled the enlightened Tommy. " His sweetheart and his sister, I suppose. Well, her ladyship's a rare plucked 'un, anyhow."

They found Teddy at last, laid beneath the body of a Frenchman whose skull had been fractured by a kick from the guardsman's charger.

Irene, of course, was the first to see him, and she tenderly lifted his bloodstained head whilst the dragoon dragged the Frenchman's corpse aside. In an instant she knew that he still breathed, and then her long pent emotion broke forth in a passionate cry of delight that startled the men standing near.

But she soon recovered from the thrill of joy that threatened to be more disastrous than the first shock of pain. Finding the wound, she deftly cut away the matted hair, and satisfied herself that there was no fracture. Harington was insensible from concussion, but the extent of the injury it was impossible to ascertain at the moment.

He was lifted into the litter, and the movement certainly seemed to restore animation, for his breathing quickened and grew stronger. Irene poured a small quantity of brandy into his mouth, and repeated it at slight intervals, meanwhile



"WHAT IS THE OFFICER'S NAME?"

asking the orderly to ride off quickly and tell Miss Harington that her brother was alive and not much injured, only stunned.

At last Teddy opened his eyes and looked at Irene bending over him. A puzzled look came into his face, but a smile chased it away, and he murmured weakly : " I know. That 's all right."

She kissed him as she whispered : " Yes, dearest, it is all right, but you must not speak yet."

Again he said : " Can't we talk here ? "

" No," she replied. " Not here."

Irene did not know what his words meant, but two hours later, when the Deputy Surgeon-General announced to the girls, that after a whiskey and soda and a sound sleep, Harington would want his breakfast, Teddy feebly explained.

He was sure that he had waked up in Heaven, and that Irene, transformed into an angel, was taking care of him.

Next morning there was unusual commotion throughout the British host.

No new attack created excitement, no specially dramatic event elsewhere had thus deeply stirred the troops.

At an early hour it was rumoured and afterwards confirmed that Mr. Thompson, the inventor, had arrived at Havre, and was even now on his way to the front. Sure enough, at two o'clock he was driven from the nearest station to the Commander-in-Chief's quarters.

He remained closeted with Lord Roberts and the principal members of the staff for a considerable time. Then the whole party drove to the station where it was seen that the train which brought Mr. Thompson, also carried one hundred large and heavy cases. Indeed, several big waggons were filled with them, and the engine-driver informed the officiating station-master that there were " lots more of 'em " on the way from Havre.

One of these cases was opened and disclosed tier upon tier

of Lee-Netford rifles, each with a peculiar-looking attachment mounted on the barrel in the place otherwise occupied by the backsight.

All the officers present were very anxious to examine and test the contrivance, but Mr. Thompson, a very quiet and self-possessed man, in whom one would never recognise the eager enthusiast who sprang to the door of the Prince of Wales's carriage on that memorable day in Hyde Park, said, with a smile : " Gentlemen, you must believe my word for a few hours longer. To-night I will ask you to accept facts, not theories."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR PAUSES.

THERE were now 600,000 British soldiers under arms on German soil.

At Stralsund Sir Evelyn's force had suffered severely from sickness and the fortunes of war, but reinforcements sent to him in equal proportions from England and America had added 200,000 to his army. He had in all no less than 350,000 men under his command, and still held, beyond the power of dislodgment, the defences of Stralsund.

General von Bremen, although in possession of a much stronger force, could do nothing except remain in disastrous impotence before him.

The main German power was established at Wittenberg, that hoary city over which once flew so defiantly the flag of the Reformation. Here, too, the German Emperor had come, eager and restless, to take supreme control. His 500,000 soldiers felt the electric presence of the gallant ruler although General Grudenau could not conceal his own uneasiness.

"I don't say," he grumbled to one of his staff officers, "that consistency is a virtue ; but I *do* maintain that in war it is well to remain of the same opinion for at least half an hour."

The fact was that the brave general lived a life of torment and perplexity. He was never certain what new whims or extravagances his impetuous sovereign might not indulge in next. And yet the veteran in his heart loved the fiery Hotspur of the Fatherland, in whose reckless courage and vehe-

ment enthusiasm was inspiration enough to inflame a dozen armies. So he endured in silence, and did his work as calmly as he could.

Twenty miles to the west, upon the banks of the Elbe, winding its way towards the great capital of German commerce lay the British. Under the Duke of Connaught were 250,000 men, of whom 150,000 were English, and the remainder American. Already there had come rumours to the enemy that large additions might still be expected, or were already on their way. The whole Saxon race was now arming itself, and a ceaseless multitude might soon commence to pour through the German Ocean into the northern provinces. And for once the fanatic pride of the empire shuddered beneath the ominous warning, and there came a pause in the wild fury of her new-born militarism.

For far below this fierce surface spirit, this savage appetite which the whirl of national struggle had inflicted upon the German people, there lay the real Teuton character—deep, silent, strong. The true Germany was homely, peaceful, and domestic, firm in her faith in her own great destinies, and yet spiritual and poetic. She was still the land of Schiller and of Goethe, still the home of arts and sciences, still the calm haunt of philosophy. Her true empire was that of mind, her true necessity that of peace. If of her ancient blood she inherited fierce passions, vehement in their fury when they were aroused, there nevertheless had grown over them the gentler ties of home, of romance, of family, of quiet industry.

The German loves to do his work, and then in the evening to drink his innocent beer in scented gardens to strains of pleasant music, and he knew that his English cousin was such as he. There was no quarrel between them. The Berliner thought of the Londoner, and this savage war began at last to appeal to him as little less than homicide. It was friend against friend. Why should *he*, for reason that was not apparent, lay a dagger at his neighbour's throat?

The reports that came to the Emperor's ears were not all quite reassuring. His people remained firm to the cause which he had made their own, but he grew troubled as he began to realise that they had no longer a blind implicit faith in its wisdom or its justice.

He was pre-occupied by these thoughts one beautiful August morning when, in company with General Grudenau, he rode forward to inspect the lines and assure himself of their disposition. The very glory of the day served to heighten his melancholy, and to give a new and strange direction to its anxieties.

For the Emperor himself, though he had given no sign of it, had begun to doubt. He was a bold, hot-headed soldier, given to sudden and impetuous resolutions, inclined to rush headlong into mistakes he afterwards regretted, but at heart filled with the spiritual fervour of his race, anxious to be just, harbouring no petty animosities, nor idle jealousies. He loved his country as deeply as her lowliest son, and his devotion was too passionate not to be guilty of magnificent blunders.

By why had he been induced to take up arms against the English people? It was not vain glory or mere lust of personal aggrandisement.

"Germany must make her way to new continents and found new provinces," he had declared to his English mother when she had reproached him with tears. "It is stern necessity, and I cannot hold it back. Shall I be coward enough to shrink from my mission? No! I must be worthy of the sublime traditions of my family. The founder of our race made Prussia great. My grandfather gave Germany her nationality and her pre-eminence. For me the third and noblest task may yet remain—to give to the Fatherland its hope, a new dominion, another empire. I am thrilled at the thought that I too may add a chapter to our glorious history!"

"And if it be inglorious?" questioned the Dowager-Empress.

"Forgive me, mother!" exclaimed the wayward son. "I do not wish to hurt you. You are English too. But kings can have no kinship. They stand isolated from all the ties of blood. My country and her destinies are to me father and mother. I cannot refuse my duty to them."

This reasoning had intoxicated him. He was as a "prophet new inspired"—the dark and horrid prospect of war was glorified in the dazzling sunlight of a splendid purpose.

But now he doubted much, and his mission seemed less clear. As day by day he saw his brave soldiers fall in battle, as he made his visits to the hospitals and saw their sufferings, as he felt the shock beneath which the German artisan and villager were staggering, when he heard of suffering and privation from every part of his dominions, when, before all, he found the war dragging on its pitiless length, with no great meed of glory to himself, rather with his purpose obscured, and perhaps blotted out by the grim and terrible present, his heart sank within him and cruel perplexities tormented him.

A sharp and sudden conflict and then immediate peace—that had been his theory. For a great right to "do a little wrong." But he was not prepared for such heroic answer to his rude challenge. Here was his own country invaded, the British arms everywhere victorious, Paris threatened, Russia helpless, and himself struggling with frantic effort to throw off this tireless foe which daily increased in energy and cunning, and daily became more strong from an infinite empire without. His purpose was already lost, doomed, hopeless. Was he to wait and let the wretched tragedy play on to a disastrous close? He shuddered as he thought of the frightful blow that even victory would deal at his country and his people.

These thoughts surged through his mind as he rode along on that fateful morning in August. Grudenau, noticing his gloomy silence, did not venture to put in a word. At last

they got to an eminence whence they saw the white lines of the advance division of his great army, gleaming in the sun, and could note the restless movements of the soldiers, as, like little dots of colour, they flitted about the green plain.

The Emperor gazed for a long time upon the scene and then, turning upon his companion, asked abruptly :

“ General, tell me, shall we beat these English ? ”

Grudenau started at this singular question, then, recovering himself, said :

“ Your Majesty, the national greatness of our race and the splendid destinies of the German people leave no doubt that——”

“ Stop, sir ! ” said the Emperor harshly. “ I asked you not as a courtier, but as a soldier.”

“ Your question is not an easy one, your Majesty,” replied the discomfited officer.

“ I desire your opinion, General,” reiterated the Emperor in determined tones. “ And I insist that you shall speak with the utmost sincerity, no matter how unpleasant it may be.”

“ I will obey you, sire,” was Grudenau’s reply. “ Germany has not exhausted her armies’ strength. She can pour army after army into the field. But——” here he paused.

“ But so can England, I suppose you mean ? ” exclaimed the Kaiser.

“ That is so, your Majesty. England and America can between them, especially now that France is so hemmed in, flood our shores. Great Britain controls and can continue to control the sea. Her supplies are inexhaustible. The fighting must always take place upon our soil, and so far I do not quite see how the situation is to be relieved.”

“ England will defeat us, you would infer ? ” asked the Emperor.

“ I did not say that,” replied the General.

“ What then ? ”

“ Merely that we cannot defeat her.”

"It is not a very exhilarating view to take, General," was the Kaiser's comment. "But I thank you. Let us return."

On the way back the Kaiser thought much of his General's words, and he felt the bitterness of their cruel but inexorable logic. Germany might fight on and on, but to what end? At the best it simply meant endless struggles, endless loss, endless misery. And for a policy that was now dead, forever dead! His generous heart was torn at the thought of all that his beloved land must endure, and endure in silence, through the dark days yet to come.

And then a dull rage filled him as he considered the collapse of his golden dream, that castle in Spain which he had built of hopes so airy. He had thought to do as his fathers had done, to compass a mighty deed that might raise his own name to theirs. But how pitiful it seemed now!

Frederick had spent his days on the battlefield, unweariedly wresting his country's very existence from the rapacious grasp of his enemies. The great Kaiser Wilhelm had united its disordered provinces into one great dominion. He had set out to do battle with the oppressors of Germany, to vanquish an insolent foe, to overturn a neighbour whose very energy was a menace to the integrity of the Teuton empire. And what was it he himself had sought to do? He was fighting with the country nearest his own in kin, with whom he was allied by blood. He had accepted the unholy alliance of a sworn foe. He was struggling with a people with whom he had no quarrel and whose wise statesmanship had supported and sustained the German cause. He had forgotten ties of friendship and claims of mutual interest. Could any act be less blest, less glorious, less heroic? And this he had done against the settled theory of his country's policy: he had dismissed the founder of the German Empire, shunned his warnings, and this was the first fruits of his self-will!

A resolve he had long been pondering quickened in his

mind as he galloped along. William was headstrong, but he had one redeeming virtue. He could own a mistake as easily as commit one ; and he could make a reparation as splendid as a sin.

When he reached headquarters an officer was awaiting him with dispatches.

"Stay with me a moment," he said to Grudenau. "I may need you."

Then he opened his dispatches. His brow clouded as he read.

"General von Bremen has certain intelligence that there are considerable reinforcements expected at Stralsund," he observed quietly to Grudenau. "They will enable the English to strike out and make a general advance. More, it is believed that a junction of the two corps will be attempted, and that, on the east at any rate, it will be impossible for us to effectively oppose it—serious news."

"What does your Majesty propose?" asked the General.

"I have decided," replied the Emperor, a trifle pale, but in firm accents. "I have decided to send for the Prince von Bismarck !"

This extraordinary reply was enough to startle the General. He looked on the young Kaiser with undisguised amazement.

"His wisdom and vast experience, no less than his devotion to his country and to myself," went on the Emperor, with a show of quiet pride, "will be most valuable at such a juncture. You will see my wishes are carried out. I request you to send an imperative telegram—stay, I will write it myself—to the Prince, and order a special train. Give instructions that there is to be no impediment of traffic. The Prince must meet me by to-morrow morning."

He hastily wrote a telegram, in which command was, without undue humiliation, mingled with entreaty, dismissed the General, and then sat down, dispatches in hand, to ponder the situation.

The Emperor had come to a singular resolution, one that could only emanate from a mind constituted as his was. It was one that would save his country from many indignities and possible catastrophes. To take the step he meditated needed a man of high-souled courage; and Wilhelm did not shrink from the burden of the responsibility. But first he desired the counsel of his great ex-Chancellor, Germany's one brilliant statesman.

The camp was on fire with the news. Excitement found a vent in much loud guttural discussion, and many a labyrinthine sentence clamped with compound words was needed to express with ponderous adequacy the general surprise.

The feeling reached an extreme pitch of tension on the following morning when, still scorning the ease and luxury of a carriage provided for him, Prince Bismarck was seen erect on horseback proceeding through the town of Wittenberg to the Emperor's quarters. There was a glow of enthusiasm and a new thrill of hope and courage in the hearts of all the old veterans who had learnt in the last great war to venerate the astute penetration and undaunted courage of the sage of Friederichsruhe. But discipline forbade the shout of greeting that trembled upon their lips.

The Emperor received the statesman at the door of his apartments and evinced publicly every sign of regard—then, leading him within, proceeded to engage him in long and private conference.

The Prince listened respectfully to the views that his eager master poured forth into his ears, and before replying, examined him narrowly on the condition and disposition of his armies. In particular he read closely and repeatedly the advices received with regard to the British movements and numbers. Only once throughout his remarks did there suggest itself a faint appearance of rebuke.

"I call you here, Prince," said the Kaiser, "as Germany's greatest son and profoundest statesman, with full gratitude for all your inestimable services to her throughout



"I FURTHER ASK YOUR ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE."

a long and splendid career; and I, your sovereign, beg your advice."

"Ah, your Majesty," was his reply. "What I did was less by merit than by avoiding mistakes. And one at least I took care never to commit."

"And that was?"

"I was never so rash as to dream of war with England."

The Emperor bowed his head.

"Germany, sire," continued the Prince, "never can and never should be hostile to Great Britain. Allied to her, she is strong, she is invincible. Her fortunes will first begin to stand in fear of falling when she forgets this rule."

"Prince," replied the Kaiser, "I am honest enough to own myself deceived. I have perpetrated a blunder which I repent with bitterness and self-reproach. I wish to repair my error. Let this fatal blunder not run out its terrible course."

"As I have explained, we can withdraw with something at least of honour from this war, if we act at once. The issue with us is still uncertain. England will gladly accept, on terms that must, I fear, be favourable to her, an armistice. Later on, we may be compelled to plead for what we can now treat on equal terms. Do you agree?"

Prince Bismarck looked steadily at his royal master.

"Your resolution, sire," he replied slowly, "is creditable to your heart and your judgment alike. Continuance of hostilities is disastrous to Germany, to her trade, to her commerce, to her happiness, and the lives of her citizens. It may prove fatal. I earnestly agree with your Majesty, and trust you will not delay your wise intentions."

"I thank you, Prince," exclaimed the Kaiser warmly, rising to his feet. "I further ask your assistance and advice in drawing up the letter I propose to send."

"The letter?" asked Bismarck in surprise.

"Yes. I cannot treat with the general of an hostile army. I must still regard my own position where I honestly can."

It would be an admission of weakness, a tacit confession of defeat. The Duke of Connaught has no powers to make terms with me. I shall send a letter to London, to the Queen. She is my grandmother, and will gladly lay my proposals before the Council of War.'"

Prince Bismarck bowed but made no reply. He followed the Emperor into an inner room.

That afternoon, two German officers, approaching the English lines, demanded audience of the Duke of Connaught. On seeing him they asked the favour of transmission, unopened, of a sealed private letter from the Emperor William of Germany to Her Majesty the Queen of England. And that night, the letter, intrusted to two English couriers, left on its journey to English shores.

The news spread apace through the camp, and the general opinion—which is so often right—that terms of peace were on the *tapis*—caused joy to the hearts of officers and men alike. It is only they who suffer the full effects of war who can most feel the relief of final settlement.

There was one man in the service of England, and with him a small band of devoted followers, who did not share in the common satisfaction of the intelligence. That man was Dr. Jameson,

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DR. JIM'S SECOND RAID.

DR. JAMESON had long since expiated the mad enterprise that ended so disastrously at Krugersdorp. He now commanded a fine body of South African horsemen, largely composed of the troopers who rode with him in the ill-fated Transvaal raid, and, as the United States army was short of cavalry, "Dr. Jim's Regiment" was detailed for duty with General Smithson.

And these Afrikanders had a score to settle with the German Emperor. His unnecessary sympathy with the Boers, his unsought telegram condemning them, did not help to endear him to a gallant corps which, whatever the action of its leaders, at least tried to do that which it conceived to be its duty.

Dr. Jameson and his followers had entered upon the campaign with eagerness. Their daily hopes, their nightly dreams, centred upon the one object of their lives—they desired above all else to get even with the Kaiser.

And now, if this talk of approaching armistice was true, the chance was remote of balancing the account.

"He is only twenty miles away," growled Sir John Willoughby; "but he might as well be in China. Perhaps to-morrow we may be told off to act as his escort during a grand palaver."

"Perhaps to-night," said Dr. Jameson, who had been deep in thought for an hour after the transmission of the mysterious letter was noised abroad.

The other men in the mess tent were surprised at his seri-

ous tone, though they shared his keen annoyance at the threatened cessation of hostilities.

"To-night!" exclaimed Major Coventry. "Impossible! The letter, whatever it contains, cannot reach Her Majesty before eleven o'clock to-morrow, and it will take at least another hour to get to Lord Salisbury. Even a cable message will not enlighten the Duke until two p.m., at the earliest. That is what one of his staff told me just now."

"He was right," observed the Colonel, in his grave pre-occupied tone; "but Her Majesty and Lord Salisbury may be called upon to deal with a cable first."

None of the few officers present could longer doubt that their leader had some serious purpose behind his words. Sir John Willoughby went to the door of the tent, walked round the outside to make sure there were no eavesdroppers, and returned. Planting himself squarely before Dr. Jameson he said: "Now, what is it?"

"It is this," was the reply. "I believe that by properly formulating our scheme and carrying it through regardless of personal consequences, we can capture him some time about 2.30 a.m."

Not a man needed enlightenment as to the individuality indicated by the personal pronoun. Comment was out of the question. They simply waited for further explanation.

"The German officers who brought the letter," went on Dr. Jameson, "had some refreshment at the headquarters mess before they returned. They sat together unattended for a moment, and as I speak German well I could not help hearing their remarks to one another. And this is the actual text of their conversation. The younger one said: 'These English cannot conceal their astonishment.' The other answered: 'Nor can the Emperor conceal his anxiety. He sleeps to-night at the headquarters of the 4th division, in the village of Westhausen, so as to be able to receive the reply at the earliest possible moment.' That is all."

"It's a lot," observed Sir John Willoughby thoughtfully.

"I don't see it," exclaimed a young captain noted for his hard riding, his utter contempt of personal danger, and his thick head.

"No, old chap, I did n't think you would," said the Colonel with a quiet smile. "But you probably will see it before to-morrow morning."

The other men laughed, and Dr. Jameson continued :

"This is my plan. We select 300 of our hardest men and best horses—men and animals up to forty miles with some hard knocks thrown in. I get permission from General Smithson—the Duke would refuse it—to conduct an extended reconnaissance, starting about eleven o'clock. Westhausen is exactly eighteen miles from here, and the country is practicable either by road or field. We walk the first ten miles, say 1.30 a.m.; we gallop the remaining eight, say 2.30; we stop for nothing; and when we reach Westhausen we surround the largest house where horses are picketed outside, and lights and orderlies knocking about show signs of an important occupant. We ourselves should carry the first explanation of the firing at the outposts. We enter the house, and if the Emperor is there, tie him on to a led horse and carry him off. If he is not there, well, we do the best we can. This time, gentlemen, there will be no dispatch-box !"

"Always ante before the draw, boys," said a deep voice at the entrance. "If there 's a strong game on deal me a hand," and Colonel Ritchie strode into the tent, looking quizzically at the startled group of conspirators, who were so engrossed in Dr. Jameson's words that they never heard the approach of the American cavalry leader. Much as they liked him they were annoyed at the interruption.

"A gentleman——" began Major Coventry angrily.

"A gentleman always knocks," laughed Ritchie, "but he can't if there ain't a door. You were all so interested that I thought someone was raising the crowd a hundred. But you 're busy. Shall I quit?" And he turned to go.

"No, Colonel Ritchie," cried Dr. Jameson. "You shall stay. We can trust *you*, at any rate. If you decide against our proposal, promise that you will forget it."

"Shake!" said Ritchie, extending his hand. "But it will be a cold deal that leaves me out."

When he heard what was in the air he whooped in the most approved style of the Sioux nation.

"Great snakes!" he yelled. "I'd ride all the way on a circus horse. But my boys will lynch me when they hear I went without them."

"Select fifty whom you can trust absolutely, and we will reduce our contingent to make room for them. I can be sure of my men, but I am not so sure of so many horses, as that last dust-up with the Uhlans tired a lot of them."

Arrangements were now rapidly discussed, and the party broke up shortly afterwards, each officer having his clear and well-defined duties to perform. Above all else, every man taken on the expedition must thoroughly understand its desperate nature. Those who fell could not be cared for, those who were dismounted could not be carried, those who reached the goal must rigidly obey orders at all personal risk and sacrifice.

Not a man backed out who was asked to volunteer.

Colonel Ritchie was intrusted with the task of gaining General Smithson's permission for the "reconnaissance." The conversation between the two is worth reproducing.

"What's afoot?" said the United States Commander, when the request was preferred.

"Well, General, it's this way," explained Colonel "Gu." "These Afrikander boys think they can ride a few. It's a fine night, with a weak imitation of a Californian moon, and perhaps we might find a stag grazing in the lowlands. It's a sort of deer hunt, with Uhlans in the background. Venison is in season just now, and our menoo of roast beef, and boiled beef, and potted beef, and beef——"

"There. That will do," was the dry answer. "You're

not lying so artistically as usual. If it was n't for this confounded rumour of peace negotiations stopping all the fun I would not sanction this affair. You're up to mischief of some sort. When Jameson and you hunt together there's trouble brewing. But listen. Don't get yourself hurt."

With this grudging assent Ritchie thought it best to depart.

By some occult means the circle of conspiracy widened. Several officers in British regiments suddenly obtained a night's leave "on urgent private affairs," chargers were borrowed, when they happened to be well-known hunters, "just for the evening, old fellow," girths were carefully examined, surcingles scrutinised, stirrup-leathers tested, revolvers cleaned, swords sharpened, and huge suppers eaten.

Each officer and private carried a large supply of weak whiskey and water—not for himself, but for his horse.

At eleven p.m. they mustered in twos and threes at a quiet rendezvous. They formed up rapidly in four troops, 320 of the finest cavalry soldiers that the world could produce, and mounted as no regiment of horse was ever mounted before.

There was no delay. "Fours right. Left wheel. Trot," were the commands in rapid succession, and they left the precincts of the lines on the right wing occupied by the United States army.

Dr. Jameson, of course, was in command, with Sir John Willoughby as second, Colonel Ritchie and Major Coventry as squadron leaders, and the rest of the officers concerned in the Transvaal raid, assisted by a sprinkling of volunteers from British regiments, distributed among the four troops.

Once well beyond the outposts, and safe from interference, a halt was called.

Dr. Jameson briefly addressed his followers, fully and lucidly explaining his project, and finally calling upon anyone who did not care for the onerous personal conditions of the enterprise to turn back.

His speech was received with dead silence, for any combined testimony of approval was out of the question.

But somebody softly whistled the air, "We won't go home until morning," and there was a general snigger. Dr. Jameson himself joined in the laugh.

"I suppose I have been answered," he said. "Now these are my final instructions. We walk for about nine miles. You can dismount and lead your horses, if you like, except the advance guard, who will be relieved each half-hour. You may smoke and talk quietly, but be momentarily on the alert for orders. I need hardly say that all orders must be instantly and absolutely obeyed."

Then the march commenced.

The way was easy to find, and a bright moon lit up the landscape for a considerable distance, so progress was rapid and uninterrupted. At half-past one the force halted for five minutes for a general tightening up of girths and accoutrements. The muster roll was gone through and no one reported missing. Then the whole party remounted and advanced, still at a walk, as they were only seven miles from Westhausen, the distance being somewhat less than Dr. Jameson had calculated from the map.

At six miles from the village they broke into a sharp trot; at five miles they were mistaken for scouting Uhlans, and allowed to reach the first outpost without being fired upon; at four miles they had a sharp tussle with a squadron of dragoons, whom they surprised in a small hamlet.

The pace then became a steady gallop, and they swept unimpeded through a brigade of infantry, who wholly failed to realise the fact that a detachment of the enemy was riding through the shaded road that intersected their lines.

The church clock of Westhausen chimed the half-hour past two when the leading troop dashed into its only street, with its clusters of cottages and isolated residences of more pretentious character.

Right in the centre of the village stood a large house usu-

ally occupied by the principal local landowner. In front and in the meadow at the rear were picketed over a hundred horses, and the moonbeams glinting from cuirass and helmet worn by several orderlies standing near the open door revealed members of what was surely the Emperor's body-guard.

"We've got him, by ——!" yelled Dr. Jameson, whose self-contained calm had now vanished beneath the spell of ungovernable excitement. There was no need for instructions. Nothing had been forgotten beforehand. Whilst the first troop knocked down the practically unarmed soldiers on duty, half of the second troop dismounted and rushed towards the building, their comrades holding their horses. No. 3 troop busied themselves in cutting the halters and heel-ropes of the tethered animals, and smacked them with the flat of their sabres to start them off in wild career, and No. 4 passed on up the street for a hundred yards, to prevent any interruption from that side.

The sentry at the door shot and killed the first trooper who ran up the steps, but a second later he was run through the heart, and a score of men were in the building. Some diverged right and left, others raced upstairs, and they found the Emperor in the first-floor front room, standing in bewildered attitude as he had risen from a camp bed, where he had laid himself fully dressed, to snatch a brief rest after the fatigues of the day.

There was a lamp burning on the table, and to his practised eye no second glance was needed to explain the turmoil in the street and the sudden entry of these brown-coated armed men into his chamber.

He sprang to his sword, but before he could reach it a dozen hands held him fast and his arms were rapidly pinioned behind his back.

Startled and utterly amazed, pale with weariness and anxiety, he was yet true to the demands of his exalted rank.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" he cried vehemently, speaking in English.

"It means, your Majesty, that you are our prisoner, and you must accompany us this instant," said an officer.

"Yes, you 've got to quit now, immediate," chimed in a San Franciscan, who could not resist the temptation to bandy words with an emperor.

"But the Duke of Connaught cannot have sanctioned these unwarrantable proceedings. I have but a few hours since written to the Queen——"

The Kaiser would have proceeded further, but the officer who had first spoken sternly broke in:

"Your Majesty, we have no time for argument. Will you walk or shall we carry you? You must decide at once."

"I will not, because I cannot resist," was the reply, in a tone of such quiet dignity that it almost unnerved the man he addressed. In happier years they had met at Cowes.

Forthwith the party reached the street, and the Emperor, without another word being spoken, was lifted on to the magnificent charger provided for him, two troopers rode close on each side, and an imperative command recalled the scattered members of the detachment. So quickly and effectually had the capture been carried out, that even yet there was no semblance of resistance in the vicinity of Westhausen.

The Emperor was placed in the centre of the third troop, and the whole party started back towards Lauenburg at a gallop. Half a mile from Westhausen a road deflected to the left, and Dr. Jameson led his men by this way in order to avoid the brigade of infantry they had passed *en route*. It was well he did so. A staff officer returning from headquarters had recognised the uniforms of the last troop as they clattered by, and had given the alarm, whilst the general in command, although unable to fathom the real purport of the raid, scented danger to his royal master.

Troops were already advancing towards Westhausen at the

double, and as there were over 10,000 men in the brigade, it is probable that not only every man in the British contingent would have been shot, but the Kaiser himself might have fared ill at the hands of his own men owing to their ignorance of the circumstances of the case.

"Dr. Jim" and his troopers, with their illustrious prisoner, were nearly four miles from Westhausen before they found a road that turned directly towards the British lines. It passed through a dense wood for some distance, and unexpectedly opened out on to a stretch of common.

Barely had the leading files left the shadow of the trees before they perceived in the distance the bright helmets of some Prussian dragoons, and the British horsemen were discovered at the same time.

The field telegraph, which was carried to high perfection in the German army, had warned the commander to be on the look-out for the party, whose numbers were correctly estimated, and he was now able to throw in their path nearly 600 stalwart Westphalians, well mounted and eager to teach these marauders a lesson.

Neither he nor his men dreamed for a moment that the Kaiser was in the midst of the enemy.

The pace at which Dr. Jameson's squadrons travelled, the manner of their formation at the moment, the surprise of the *rencontre*, all contributed to confuse the issues of the cavalry combat that forthwith ensued.

One fact stood out boldly on behalf of the British. They knew the prize they had at stake.

This was no ordinary midnight scuffle between opposing vedettes. Outnumbered two to one by the Germans, each man who had followed Dr. Jameson in this memorable ride was ready to face single-handed any odds that offered, and prepared to throw his life in the scale if that would suffice to turn the balance in favour of his comrades.

One order and one only was given.

"Cut your way through!" shouted the Colonel, and wed-

ding example to precept, he clapped spurs to his horse to urge him along at top speed, and rode straight at the nearest batch of dragoons.

With a wild yell his men followed him, and, by sheer intuition, those in the rear knew what was going on in the front.

In no wise unwilling for the game, the Germans were nevertheless unable to get their horses in rapid motion before the leading Britons were upon them, and the first batch of Westphalians disappeared as though they had been struck by lightning.

But the tremendous phalanx of men and horses behind, by its sheer density, soon rendered further progress impossible.

This consideration told both ways.

If it hindered the Englishmen, it also enabled more of them to reach the scene of conflict, and for a couple of minutes there was the heartiest give-and-take *mêlée* that the eyes of a soldier could wish to see.

The Emperor, secure in the midst of the third troop, which had been halted by Colonel Ritchie, watched the mad scene, with its fierce energy heightened by the uncertain light of the waning moon, with its hoarse cries of rage and keener notes of agony, the neighing and screaming of wounded horses, the clash of sword against sword or helmet, and he raged at the impotence of his position.

He would have bartered his kingdom at that moment to be free and at the head of his gallant troops.

Dr. Jameson, bareheaded and breathless, blinded with blood from a cut across the forehead, suddenly heard Ritchie's voice, quite close to him, shouting some orders.

"Is *he* safe?" cried the Colonel.

"Yes," was the answer, "and by thunder he's going straight through now."

Jameson managed to clear his eyes and after a moment's consultation he rode again into the press of the fight. He is

endowed by nature with a high penetrating voice and he put all his force into a final command :

“ Leading squadron outwards wheel ! ”

Some of the men heard him, others did not, but those who understood repeated the order. Its object was quickly made apparent.

No. 4 troop, composed entirely of Americans, now rode forward in half sections, every man with his sword returned, and a six-chambered revolver in each hand.

Forcing their chargers with knee and spur, firing point blank into the mass of Westphalian cavalry, and practically making every shot to tell upon a horse or man, the United States soldiers succeeded, as with no other arm they could have succeeded, in clearing a path for themselves.

Followed closely by the Emperor's escort they smashed their way through to the farther side of the common, and Major Coventry's squadron, now sadly diminished in numbers, faced round to stop pursuit.

This part of their task was not a difficult one.

Nearly one-third of the Germans had fallen, and there were few among the survivors who did not bear upon their persons some marks of the contest.

The Emperor, during this dramatic scene, had not uttered a word. He disdained even to cry for help as he was hurried through the press of his own troops, and he rode quietly forwards for nearly an hour after all danger of immediate pursuit had passed without exhibiting any sign of the burning thoughts that possessed his soul.

At a midway farmhouse a brief halt took place, and the Emperor's arms were unbound.

He was offered some slight refreshment, which he pleasantly accepted. Then he said, with a smile, to the officer who had arrested him, and who never left his side for a moment :

“ That was a good fight ! ”

“ Superb, your Majesty.”

"You were better mounted than my men. How many do you number?"

"All told, 320, your Majesty."

"Ah. And you cut your way through twice as many of my best soldiers. No wonder you dare to face the world in arms. What casualties have you sustained?"

"I fear, your Majesty, that we have left 130 men on the field. That is a rough estimate made *en route*."

The Emperor sighed deeply. "It is a terrible price. And my own brave fellows, too. Even more of them, by necessity. Believe me, Captain, I am not worth it."

At 5.15 a.m., as the first notes of the *réveille* pealed forth in the grateful morning air, the gallant band, now so wofully diminished in numbers, rode into the British lines. The Emperor was at once taken to a spacious tent, and invited to enter. He was followed by a slightly built but active-looking man, whose forehead was roughly bandaged, and who was haggard from loss of blood, want of sleep, and extreme physical exhaustion. He stood for a moment looking at the Emperor.

"I am now going, your Majesty," he said quietly, "to announce your arrival to the Duke of Connaught. Meanwhile, I have taken every precaution to secure your comfort, and can only express my regret if the rude necessities of the night were unduly irksome. Here, however, you will find every convenience," and, with a comprehensive sweep of his hand, the newcomer indicated the surroundings.

The Emperor followed his gesture, and the eyes of both men fell at the same instant upon a number of telegraph forms, ostentatiously displayed on a camp writing-table.

Then the Kaiser spoke. "May I ask," he said, "to whom I owe my capture and these—these delicate attentions?"

"Your Majesty, I am Dr. Jameson."

At nine o'clock that morning mounted orderlies from the War Office galloped furiously through the streets of London

with imperative summonses to the members of the Council of National Defence.

At ten they were gathered in Lord Salisbury's room at the Foreign Office, and the sensational telegram from the Duke of Connaught was read. His announcement was received with silent amazement. Mr. Gladstone, bending forward with his hand over his ear that not a word might escape him, was the first to speak. "A most interesting example of historic irony," he said, nodding gravely.

"Telegrams figure largely in the life of the German Emperor," observed Lord Wolseley.

"The incident renders an already complex position more difficult." It was Lord Salisbury who uttered these words.

The Council was deeply engaged in discussing this unexpected development when a secretary entered with a special letter from Her Majesty. He handed it to the Prime Minister, who slowly read the autograph document within, and then, with equal deliberation, examined an inclosure. It was the Kaiser's letter to the Queen.

In simple phrase it requested that a direct representative of Her Majesty might be sent to Germany to arrange the terms of an honourable peace, and thus bring to an end a needless conflict fraught with disaster to both nations.

For a little while consideration of the dispatch was impossible. Each turned to his neighbour to eagerly express his astonishment and delight. But at last collective deliberation was resumed.

"Gentlemen," said Lord Salisbury, "before proceeding to discuss the conditions of peace, it is important that we should decide upon the person to perform this onerous mission. I am convinced that we shall best serve the interests of England, and at the same time meet the wishes of the Emperor, if we ask H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to undertake it."

All eyes instinctively turned in one direction.

"Gentlemen," said the Prince, rising from his chair, "if this be your pleasure, I am ready."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PRINCE AND THE EMPEROR.

ON the afternoon of the day on which the Council of National Defence met in London, an important telegram was handed to the English Commander-in-Chief at Lauenburg. When he had read it, he summoned General Sir Richard Sheridan and gave him a few brief instructions.

"I am ordered," he said, "to set the German Emperor at liberty without delay. It is a duty which delicacy forbids my performing in person. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will proceed at once to his Majesty and inform him of the decision arrived at in London. You will provide an escort of cavalry and see that he is conveyed, with as little observation as possible, to the German lines. You will also inform him that his letter has duly reached her Majesty, and that the Council of National Defence has agreed to a proposal of Lord Salisbury that the Prince of Wales shall proceed to Germany and meet the Emperor to discuss the terms of an armistice. His Royal Highness will arrive here to-morrow and will at once communicate with him as to the place and conditions of *rencontre*. I leave it to your good sense to do all that courtesy and discretion suggest."

Sir Richard concealed what emotion he might have felt at this news, and, selecting a guard of honour, proceeded to the Emperor's tent.

The Kaiser had sufficiently recovered his good humour. He was a soldier born, who knew how to submit to the strange reverses of battle, and he listened to the communication made to him with grave respect.

"I beg you to thank the Duke," he said in reply, "for the consideration he has shown me. I trust that German soldiers will never show themselves less lacking in such honourable courtesies of war."

Sir Richard restrained a smile. He was Saxon enough to scout the possibility that the German or any other Emperor could ever be in such a position as to enable him to exhibit courtesy of this kind to an English general.

With all becoming marks of respect, he formed up his guard of honour and rode off with his illustrious charge. Early the following morning the German army received back its wandering chief, almost before it had missed him, and Prince Bismarck was so profoundly relieved that he did not during the whole day make a single reference to the military genius of his old friend, Von Moltke. The Kaiser found no difficulty, on his part, in controlling his exuberance of spirits or the undue emphasis of his opinions. He only once openly referred to the incident.

"The British," he remarked to the Prince, "say little about their colonial empire. But their object-lessons are admirable. I do not wonder that they have seized the earth if they breed such amateurs as Dr. Jameson."

Bismarck grunted and took a long pull at his beaker of Munich beer. He proffered no reply, but he muttered to himself :

"*Their* amateurs found empires; *ours* do their best to lose them !"

Luckily the Kaiser did not hear him, and the Prince, much relieved by his aside, filled his pipe once more and smoked on with great content.

Towards nightfall some excitement towards the rear of the British camp announced that something unusual was happening. It was noticed, too, that the Duke of Connaught, with his whole staff, had stationed himself at the temporary dépôt which marked the terminus of the military railway. Through the army there rushed the welcome news that the

heir to the throne had already arrived. That ever popular favourite, the Prince of Wales, was now in the midst of the troops who worshipped him so well.

A salute greeted him as he stepped from the carriage, in the uniform of a Field Marshal, and grasped the hand of his brother. Then, forgetting restraints of discipline as they recognised the well-known face, a mad shout went up from ten thousand throats. In such wise the British Tommy broke in to add his own spontaneous welcome and cheer old England in the person of her Prince.

The latter saluted in response. And then his brother, placing his hand upon the arm of General Smithson, said :

“ Permit me, before anything else is done, to present to you a brave officer and a skilled commander to whom I owe many debts of gratitude, and with me all Englishmen.”

“ General,” observed the Prince, extending his hand, and not without a smile, “ is it consistent with your republican principles to bestow a welcome upon a grateful ally ? ”

“ Believe me, sir,” replied the impetuous Smithson with fervour, “ if we saw much of you on the other side, we should all turn royalists to a man ! ”

His Royal Highness made a laughing retort, and the three rode off to headquarters.

There was a gentle disposition to good-humoured riot throughout the camp that night, and the fiery colour-sergeant made little effort to check the spirits of his festive company. Jest ran high, and many an improvised song dealt, as Tommy loves to deal, with the delicate diplomatic position that lay before the two chief actors. One of them ended thus, to a catchy tune which was quickly taken up :

When I saw our William, damme,
He was blubbing for his mammy,
And he pined for German sausage and for sauerkraut in pails.
So says I unto the Kaiser :
“ You may go away to-day, sir,
But you 'd best look out to-morrow when you meet the Prince of
Wales,”

And there was indeed cause for both these distinguished personages to look to their conference on the morrow with some anxiety. If the Prince's mission was delicate, the Emperor's was still more so. True, he had not to meet the representative of England as a captive. That indignity was spared him. But Dr. Jameson's escapade had considerably embarrassed his situation. It was difficult to plead the equality of a commander surrounded by an unbeaten army.

It was not what could be said, but what neither would care to say, that formed the difficulty. The Prince of Wales could not hint that the Kaiser's cause was lost, and that the latter was suing as a defeated general. The Kaiser dared not confess that terms of peace were only such as the British Government might insist on. Beneath the surface of courteous words there was bound to be a subtle war of hidden meaning. It was to be a contest of tact; and the Kaiser reflected, not with overmuch equanimity, that tact was not a particularly strong element in his character.

An hour before noon on the next day, the Emperor set out with a small staff of officers to the memorable farmhouse midway between Westhausen and Lauenburg. He had taken the precaution early in the day of laying bare his heart to Bismarck. The great German Chancellor did not mince matters as he gave his earnest advice.

"Peace! Before all things, peace!" he exclaimed at the close of his exhortations. "Do not forget, sire, that fencing is waste of force and fights against you, when the conclusion is obvious. It is better to accept with grace than irritate by useless argument. Your Majesty will use the occasion well, and miss no opening that the English Prince may give you; but I would humbly recommend that, if you fail to achieve what you propose, it is better to submit to the generosity of Great Britain than incur her anger."

The Kaiser had no retort to make, but thanked his wise counsellor submissively.

When he reached the rendezvous and entered the farm-

house, past which he remembered so well riding but three nights before, he had time to collect his thoughts and to ruminate, somewhat mournfully, on the task before him.

He wished that the hours he had spent upon the elaboration of ornate proclamations, swollen with plethoric terms, had been bestowed upon acquiring the nice distinctions of subtle speech, for he had cause to fear the unassuming tongue of his opponent. It was rich in resource; it was strewn with unsuspected pitfalls and deceptive turns. Danger lurked in a compliment, and in concession there was guile. The Prince, beyond all men he had ever met, possessed the rare gift of tact. He lured his adversaries to their ruin. He had an innocence of phrase that was a snare unto the thoughtless, and in his honey there was gall. And then the Kaiser reflected that the English language had an embarrassing wealth of terms; it boasted as many words as any three Continental tongues. Each one of these was an armed man waiting to do him battle. He was hopelessly outnumbered before he entered into the engagement !

Half-an-hour had elapsed when an orderly announced the arrival of the Prince of Wales. The young monarch rose to welcome his relative and foe. All others retired. The Emperor noticed that his visitor made him formal greeting and did not offer him his hand.

Colouring slightly, he opened the conference.

"Permit me, first, your Royal Highness," he said, "to thank the British Government for its generosity in giving me my liberty. It was a chivalrous action, worthy of a generous foe."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince gravely. "It is for us to regret that you did not communicate your desire for an armistice to the Commander-in-Chief of our Second Army Corps. It would have prevented an unfortunate occurrence which I at least deeply regret."

"For that I do not care a jot !" exclaimed the Kaiser,

with warmth. "I am ready at all times to accept the fortunes of war upon my own person."

"You misunderstand me," was the reply. "Much as I am concerned by that mishap, I was thinking of the preparations carried out at Southampton, which an early telegram would have delayed. Your message reached Her Majesty too late to prevent the embarkation and dispatch of a corps of over 150,000 additional troops, largely American, which I presume are now in the act of landing upon the quays of Hamburg!"

The Emperor started. Here was a new and unpleasant factor in the game. He had practically lost even his superiority of force.

"Let us forget such circumstances for a time," he begged. "Believe me, I have long commenced to regret my haste in co-operating in such an enterprise. The war is a terrible blunder. I feel it deeply. You will scarcely doubt my sincerity?"

"Not in the least, your Majesty," returned the Prince heartily, "not even if you were to insist that it dated as far back as the battle of Worthing."

This delicate thrust brought flames of colour to the Kaiser's cheeks.

"You are severe, sir," he said. "I embarked upon this war in error. I imagined it essential to the extension of the German Empire. I was wrong. My error I have seen most clearly, and it is surely not unnatural that I should hasten to confess it."

"By no means," observed the Prince sententiously. "Time frequently works great changes in our opinions."

"Before matters have reached a climax," continued the Emperor, "whilst Germany still boasts her inexhaustible armies, whilst yet a decisive blow is lacking which should place either of us in an inferior position, I have begged that we may meet and seek some conclusion that may leave the honour of either of us untouched. Germany has nothing to gain by a continuance of this frightful struggle."

"So it would seem!" exclaimed the Prince sternly.
"But *we* have."

"You?"

"Does it not strike you, your Majesty, that you have thundered at our gates a question? That question demands an answer. It can never be left to conjecture. You assailed us wantonly, without warning. You confess you had no reason for your swift assault. And now, driven back to your own dominions, you tell us you were wrong, and suggest that we should sheath our swords."

"In the interests of peace."

"You are a convincing advocate of peace, sir!" was the Prince's quick retort. "I fancy the argument was somewhat rudely opened!"

"And what do you gain by the continuance of war?"

"This is what we gain. A peremptory question demands a definite and final reply. You have asked whether the British Empire—I may now add, the Saxon race—can hope to withstand the shock of allied enmity. You have chosen a magnificent stage for the discussion of this delicate point. The whole world acts as audience. We cannot, we will not, disappoint it. If no longer our policy of peace can secure the safety of mankind, we will at least make it certain that the savage vindication to which we have been driven shall be conclusive. These problems, clouded by the subtle rancour and secret conspiracies of European states, can no longer rest in dubiety. This war is the Final War. If we have to strike, it shall be a stroke to kill the very hope of a successor. We will not leave such doubts seething in the cauldron of international distrust and hatred. They will be resolved once for all, and no one shall again dare to raise them!"

The Emperor grew uneasy before the stern logic of the Prince.

"Whatever your purpose," he declared, "I maintain that Germany is the natural ally of England!"

"A natural ally!" exclaimed the Prince. "An alliance like that of conspirators, then, which must be sealed in blood! An alliance written upon the plains of Stralsund, and scored upon the stones of Neuminster! Let us be frank, your Majesty. I still await your proposals."

"I will make them clear," replied the Kaiser with hesitation, "if I have not already done so. We meet on equal terms. We both hate this infamous war of brethren. Let us gather in our forces and proclaim a peace. It is Germany's policy to seek the hand of England. Surely you can recognise in this meeting a desire that is not false? Do you fear our sincerity when our nation is still behind us?"

"We do not fear Germany, sir," declared the Prince proudly. "The German people are not with you. But who will be responsible for the vagaries of their statesmen?"

"Not their statesmen," hastily interrupted Wilhelm. "I take the blame upon myself."

"I cannot waste time in distinguishing between those of her advisers who are statesmen and those who are not!" was the rapid retort.

"Will not a peace suffice you?"

"By no means!"

"Then what do you demand?"

"We demand," said the Prince, "a complete settlement of the question which this war has raised."

"What question?" asked the Kaiser.

"Do you mean that you have forgotten it? Why it is you who have suggested it. You have declared that it is necessary to decide whether England is to be supreme throughout the world! We have never propounded such a point. But as you demand it *shall* be determined, there is nothing left but to determine it."

"Why, sir," exclaimed the embarrassed sovereign, "you speak as a conqueror."

"Nay; that would be premature! I do not wish to be compelled to."

"Your argument is obvious. You contend that we have to settle whether England shall control the affairs of Europe. You are surely not serious. England is not a Continental power!"

"True," replied the Prince shortly, "it is a position we should have owed to you!"

"But do you insist on dominating the world?"

"You misunderstand me," said the Prince. "Let me again review the position. This challenge, thrown out to us, we have accepted. You have forced us to take the settlement of European problems in our own hands, or to have our own position settled by you. There was no alternative. It is a tremendous task. We have not shrunk from it. These problems shall indeed be settled. There shall be no more questionings. When we have settled them we shall be content to withdraw, but only when we have made it impossible for any selfish power to raise them again. There is but one condition, therefore, of a treaty of peace. It is that you side with England in her task. You must accept her as an arbitrator and support her award. If you do not, it is clear we are still at war."

"And German interests——?"

"German interests, no less than the interests of France, Russia, Austria, Turkey, and the remaining countries, are involved in the delicate problem we have to settle. You cannot be exempt. Whether you will gain, or whether you will lose, must necessarily depend upon the general justice of the policy you have pursued."

"But I should prefer to know more of the details of your scheme."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince coldly; "such details I cannot give, even if I would. We must consult America. She is our ally, and has armed herself. I understand that more than three millions of her people are waiting to be carried over to these shores to take their part in the grim preliminaries!"

The Emperor paused. He felt his position to be hopeless. Each step made it worse ; and what he heard convinced him only the more of the madness of his act and the imperative call for immediate peace.

" Let me understand," he continued at last. " You say that you will withdraw when the guarantees for final peace satisfy you. What guarantee can you deem sufficient ? "

" That," observed the Prince, " is no difficult matter. We shall demand immediate and complete disarmament. "

" But," cried the Kaiser, " who can effect such a consummation ? "

" We," was the laconic reply.

" But how, if you are not in arms ? "

" It seems," said the Prince, " that England and America will necessarily remain in arms till the end is effected. "

" Heavens ! " exclaimed the amazed monarch. " Do you ask that we shall lay ourselves bare to an armed foe ? "

" You do not trust us yet, it appears," was the Prince's response. " Trust is the prime condition of peace. I regret I have no other terms to offer. "

For many long minutes the Kaiser remained, wrapped in thought, torn by a thousand cruel perplexities. Yet he could see no issue to them any way. The insuperable power of the British race confronted him. It was hopeless longer to dream of a happy encounter.

And after all could not Britain be trusted ? Her history stood behind her : She had ever been the advocate of peace, the champion of liberty. A free, emancipated Europe ! It was a strange, an inspiring thought ! A new era of hope, of industry, of progress.

Beyond all came the ominous words of Bismarck to his mind.

" Peace ! Before all things, peace ! "

Aye, and not only that. This wise, far-seeing statesman—what had he said at his last exhortation ?

" It is better to submit to the generosity of Great Britain than incur her anger. "

England was now firm set on her purpose. She must advance to its attainment or be hurled back, crushed. And who could take up this giant's task? Germany? Impossible.

But this was not all. Behind England was America. It was the whole race—the race that pervaded the world, that gave to the earth its history and to the sea its speech. Here was a power strong as that of destiny. Not all that remained of mankind could keep back this irresistible people.

Her purpose, too—not one of empire, of ravage, of possession; rather a holy and religious purpose that had for aim the union of the world in one eternal bond of peace. It was the dream of philosophy, the message of science, the yearning of art. In its beneficent light the earth would bloom into new beauty. It was a mission that no brute force or savage hate could stay on its triumphant course.

Such thoughts coursed through the Kaiser's mind. And then, rising suddenly, he exclaimed :

“ Prince, I accept your terms. I swear to assist your purpose. Germany shall submit to your award. Henceforth we shall be allies and not foes ! ”

The Prince of Wales sprang up in eagerness from his chair and held out his hand :

“ You have spoken nobly, nephew,” he said. “ Your trust in us shall not be shaken. Your words have not only saved the fate of Germany : they have saved the fate of the world ! ”

And in solemn silence, each moved by deep emotion, these two representatives of the great Teutonic nations clasped hands in token of their sacred compact.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW THE PARISIANS DANCED.

“WE will dance behind our fortifications,” wrote the *Gil Blas*. As a mere trope, an idle metaphor, the phrase would serve, but as a description of actual fact it was far from being justified by events.

Paris was not in the least degree jubilant. Although the military spirit of the people was stirred by the sheer necessities of the moment, there were glimpses of rational judgment which showed to thoughtful observers that gay Lutetia would be herself again when the war had ended and not until then.

The Ministry, in reality tottering to its base, was ostensibly propped up by public opinion.

Now, in an earnest, self-sacrificing, devoted Paris, this would have been impossible. The fierce energy of the citizens would demand rapid success, or equally rapid change. But here a more cynical mood betrayed itself. “These clever fellows got us into this mess,” said the city in effect, “let them get us out of it again. They must have every chance of convincing both us and the English that they were not mistaken in bringing about this disastrous war.”

This wholly unexpected attitude on the part of the fickle Parisian mob did not reassure the President and M. Hano-taux.

“During the Commune,” murmured the head of the State, “a man was in power one week and forgotten the next.” And he sighed with the reflection that the last state of that man was better than the first.

"My dear colleague," replied with a smile the fire-eating scientist whose advent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had proved so epoch-making, "Fate is often feline. We are being played with before the moment of immolation."

If the chiefs of the Republic secretly expressed such opinions, who shall describe the loud-mouthed fury of that large class of Parisians whose entire fortunes depended on the gratification of the expensive tastes cultivated by English milords and American honourables and their wives and daughters.

Where was now the Paris hat, where the *gants de suède*? Of what avail were the gowns of Dusé and the dinners of Josef? The hotels and emporia of fashion closed, the large restaurants empty, the Casino mute—the capital of the world, *où l'on s'amuse*, was indeed desolated.

When a party of wealthy shopkeepers dined at Durand's, both proprietor and guests ground their teeth in silent rage as they read the label on the bottle of superior champagne: "The same as supplied to England."

Alas, England was drinking beer, and English ladies were wearing goods manufactured in Bradford or Manchester.

The first outbreak of real patriotic feeling sprang tumultuously into existence when the news came that Russia had crumbled into fragments, and that the German Emperor had yielded.

So France was again left to fight on unaided to the bitter close. Why was it always France that must pour forth her blood and her treasure to advance a cause or bolster a theory? Did mankind need teaching the tenets of liberty—France must wade through accumulated horrors to provide the rest of the human race with an object-lesson. Did the world require some magnificent demonstration of the art of empire—France again must give her sons and her millions to scrawl the thesis across the face of Europe. And when England, the all-pervading power, grew so arrogant that the rest of the nations panted for elbow-room, the final outcome was

that France should be down-trodden to give other malcontents breathing-space.

For a time it seemed that Paris would be true to her traditions, and hold each street as a barricade, and each house as a fort.

But the fever died as quickly as it arose, and by common consent the blame for the situation was placed on the shoulders of the authorities.

Of course politics ran high in the cafés, and the duties of patriotism were proclaimed in flamboyant terms.

"Citizens and brothers," a tremulous wine-merchant cried from the celebrated Boulevard Haussmann, as he addressed a crowd of customers, "Paris must be true to her traditions. We must give our last sou, spend our last drop of blood, in defence of these stones hallowed by the footsteps of the pioneers of liberty, equality, and fraternity."

Yet, at a late hour that night, he and his wife hid all their jewellery and the greater part of their money beneath a flagstone which supported the kitchen boiler.

For the truth about the sortie was now leaking out, and even the vainglorious survivors found it necessary to depict the courage of the English in lurid language, if only to enhance the prodigies of valour they had themselves performed. Who should stay such Paladins as the foe?

The President and M. Hanotaux conferred together very seriously when the German Ambassador communicated to them the result of the conversation between the Emperor and the Prince of Wales.

"Are we to expect, then," M. Hanotaux said in freezing tones, "that our quondam ally is about to become an active enemy on the eastern frontier, in obedience to this new-found gospel of peace and brotherly love?"

"No, sir," was the dignified reply. "It is no part of His Majesty's programme to turn traitor. His desires were prosecuted in the interests of the German people, but he expressly stipulated that he should be exempted from

further co-operation in the war save in the guise of a mediator."

"France has received little help from German arms in this quarrel," was the contemptuous retort. "She wishes none from her diplomacy."

"Will you not follow the example of Germany?" said the Ambassador.

"Never," cried the Frenchmen, speaking together.

The Ambassador then withdrew.

For a little while neither spoke. At last the President said: "My dear colleague, what is to be the end?"

"We must triumph." The words were brave, but the tone was not that of assurance.

"But if we do not? I tell you candidly I fear the worst. Investment of Paris is impossible! I cannot see how any point of the lines is to be forced; yet I tremble. The unbroken successes of the invaders, their indomitable spirit, their carelessness of consequences—above all, the quiet confidence with which Lord Roberts is moving his forces on the west, perplex and sadden me. What if Paris be carried by a *coup de main*?"

"There is always a pistol," was the moody response.

"*Pouf!* You are distracted to make such an answer. I am not speaking of myself, or of you, but of France. What can be done for France?"

"All that is possible. Secure the best terms, and then, for ourselves, *bon jour!*"

Changed, indeed, was the tone of the stout-hearted minister since that council at Versailles in May!

General Saussier, as became a brave soldier, was more hopeful.

He had 500,000 men under his command, not counting the Garde de Paris and the citizen battalions now doing duty within the walls.

His defences were justly deemed impregnable. His communications south and east of the capital were unimpaired,

and he had satisfactorily arranged for a strong corps from Chalons to throw itself in the path of Sir Redvers Buller. He counted upon the English hurling themselves vainly against the circle of forts, while France was collecting her yet magnificent energies for a final effort to crush the persistent foe.

A man of colossal bulk, and unwieldy withal, the French Commander-in-Chief bore charger after charger to the earth whilst he cantered from camp to camp and from battery to battery. When too physically exhausted himself to remain in the saddle he was driven in a landau on his tour of inspection, and he certainly succeeded in impressing officers and men alike with belief in his sagacity and respect for his unflagging energy.

His plans were well laid so far as the tactical distribution of his troops went. Under the most favourable conditions his great opponent must require some hours to move any material section of his army, and at the same time, by keeping strict watch upon the British, General Saussier could bring to bear against them a vastly superior force.

These considerations, backed by the 2000 splendid cannon that peered through the embrasures of the fortifications, were potent reasons for the hopefulness of the French military chief.

He looked solely at facts. The President and M. Hanotaux thought of principles.

Had he been present at certain midnight drills taking place nightly within the British lines, General Saussier might not have felt so confident.

That the public did not share his views was shown by the actions of many besides the keeper of the *estaminet* in the Boulevard Haussmann. The real reasons were never avowed, but it was surprising to note the numbers of women and children whom their male protectors thought to be suffering from the ill effects of a hot September.

Trains travelling east were crowded with healthy-looking

invalids, all of whom had suddenly discovered the marvelously salubrious qualities of the Vosges mountains.

There was disturbance even within the sacred circle of the arts.

So it came to pass that one night, when the peaceful calm of the Tuileries garden was only accentuated by the distant rumbling of commissariat waggons crossing the Pont de la Concorde, a small group of men were busily occupied in digging deeply beneath the trees in a secluded spot.

Long they laboured, and when the trench was ample enough they solemnly interred two heavy packages, securely bound in waterproof cloths, and so cumbrous that they required the united strength of many hands to lower them with ropes into the grave-like receptacle prepared for them.

The diggers were men whose names are famous throughout the world, and they were rescuing the Venus de Milo from the dangers that threatened her.

Once before, so goes the legend, has the beautiful Aphrodite descended from her throne in the Louvre and sought obscure safety at the hands of her worshippers. When Prussian shells began to rain on Paris from Chatillon the majestic statue was carefully stowed away in a secret resting-place until siege and occupation were ended.

And now the scene was re-enacted — not without due cause. If you doubt the earnestness of these devotees at the shrine of Venus, you should read the inscription on the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum.

When Napoleon took the bronze horses from St. Mark's, in Venice, he was compelled by treaty to restore them. England never gives back that which she has once grasped, and Aphrodite must never gaze with calm self-sufficiency at Phoebus Apollo. So she was hidden for a space beneath the trees of the Tuileries.

Art in the Quartier Latin was not so serious.

Here the painter, the musician, and the man of letters foregathered to growl at everything and everybody. Paris

might be hypnotised by the dread of impending evil, but not so the children of Bohemia.

They had found, to their great joy, that at least one proprietor of a restaurant so bubbled over with patriotic ardour that an epigram at the expense of the British meant a free dinner, and a rousing speech, *à la patrie*, sufficed for unquestioned additions to an already surfeited slate.

Thus did Paris fret and fume, and stir uneasily as though in slumber disturbed by fearful dreams, whilst a few miles away on the west the might of Britain assembled in dread and portentous array.

And there was no dancing—not even at the Bal Bullier or the Moulin Rouge.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ELECTRIC RIFLE.

A GLANCE at a map of the Seine will show that Lord Roberts had well chosen the position of his advanced lines. He practically held the whole of the Seine Valley in front of the forts of Marly and Corneilles, two of the strongest fortified posts in the *banlieue* of Paris.

Had the French been wise enough to convert the Plateau de l'Hautie, on the north bank of the Seine, into another Plevna redoubt, as they had always intended to do since the Franco-German war of 1870-71, the British would not so easily have gained a footing in close proximity to the outer ceinture of the fortifications of Paris.

But the Germans were at Versailles almost before the Parisians realised that the investment of their beloved capital was really about to be accomplished, and now the English Moltke had gripped the city whilst its inhabitants were still talking of driving him into the sea.

Nevertheless, the task essayed by the British Commander-in-Chief was infinitely more arduous than that set to his predecessor.

The Germans were called upon to besiege a strong fortress which required investing lines of forty miles in length: Lord Roberts, to achieve his end by the same means would need to enclose a circle of 125 miles.

To state the nature of the undertaking is to demonstrate its impracticability, and the hero of Kandahar was not the man to waste time upon the impossible. Paris was either to be carried by a *coup*, or not carried at all.

Already, arrangements were in progress for strong reinforcements to be sent from the two German expeditions, now set at liberty, and Sir Redvers Buller was rapidly making his way through Southern France. But the skilled soldier who had borne the brunt of war well knew that if his plan succeeded he had enough troops and to spare for the purpose. If it failed, he was in no worse position than before, as he did not intend to uselessly spend the lives of his men once he became convinced of the inutility of his project.

Delay was consequently undesirable. It only gave the enemy time to put his house in order; and if the sole means of subjugating France was to ignore the capital for a time and continue to overrun the provinces, it was obvious that the non-success of an assault in no way altered the general situation.

General Saussier, the Governor of Paris, and generalissimo of the French forces, considered that his adversary had placed himself in an untenable position by occupying the Achères-Poissy line.

It will be seen that, as the bird flies, a direct assault upon the environs of Paris was out of the question. Three times does the Seine interpose its sinuous course between the Achères plateau and the walls of the capital.

Every position north and south of the river is covered by forts deemed impregnable. The French commander scouted the idea of an attack by the south, with Marly, St. Cyr, Versailles, Châtillon, and the rest blocking the way, whilst a rapid crossing at Conflans, with the objective of a northerly attack by the St. Denis side, although the only remaining method open for an advance, was surely impossible through country dominated by such strongholds as Corneilles, Cotillons, Franconville, Montmorency, Montlignon, and Domon.

In a word, General Saussier and his staff were in absolute ignorance of Lord Roberts's intentions or their conceivable development, so they contented themselves with perfecting the telephonic and telegraphic communications between the

outlying forts and the inner circle, with its three huge entrenched camps, and there waited impatiently until a definite move by the assailant might enable them to crush him with greater certainty.

They had not long to wait.

When Lord Roberts had armed two Special Service Corps, of 50,000 men each, with Mr. Thompson's electric rifle—this being its common but misleading name—and their commanders, Generals Massy and Alleyne respectively, were able to assure him that the troops were perfectly acquainted with its novel properties, he resolved forthwith to put the weapon to the supreme test of active service.

There could be no question of its efficiency. Repeated experiment had demonstrated this beyond the domain of doubt. The one point that could only be determined by a battle was its moral effect upon the enemy.

Here, it is true, opinions differed, but Lord Roberts believed in the invention as fully as did Lord Wolseley, and both distinguished soldiers were more enthusiastic in this respect than Mr. Thompson himself, for he modestly disclaimed the authority of an expert in warfare.

It is now time to disclose the exact nature of this remarkable arm, whose prime quality was that it rendered hostilities by night far more deadly than during a similar battle by day.

Mr. Thompson had left the Lee-*Metford* magazine rifle untouched internally. He had only added a small but intensely powerful electric lamp, which fitted easily on to the flanges of the back-sight.

So far there was nothing in the idea save a neat adaptation of the search light, with its motive power derived from a simple, tiny, and well-constructed battery, charged with a voltage sufficient to burn for four hours if constantly in use. A spare coil, carried with the ammunition, could readily be applied by the soldier whilst in action. Thus eight hours of continuous service was secured, and it was computed that

even in the hottest engagement the intervals obtained by the fact that each shot fired extinguished the light automatically until it was again brought into play by the user, would yield a total period of twelve hours' duration of service.

But Mr. Thompson was a skilled optician, in addition to his professional attainments as an electrical engineer.

What he had done, unaided, was to solve the many problems attending the refraction of light.

An ordinary search-lamp invariably spreads its beams in a V, and even this concentration is only obtained by reflectors, which compel the rays to travel in a definite direction, rather than follow their natural diffusion towards all points of a sphere.

After years of untiring endeavour this quiet and unassuming genius had discovered a means of refracting, or literally breaking, the rays of light, by passing them through a double prism at their only avenue of outlet, whereby they all travelled in almost parallel lines.

The result was that at a distance of fifty, eighty, or even one hundred yards, the radius covered by the powerful illuminant within the lamp did not exceed a circle of six inches in diameter.

It was a mere matter of adjustment to obtain the subsequent result that a bullet fired from a rifle accurately fitted with one of these lamps should lodge in the centre of the area covered by the light.

It did not matter how the rifle was held or fired. Let that murderous ray rest for an instant upon any appreciable object the pressure of the trigger made it mathematically certain that in the same fraction of a second the projectile was lodged in the precise locality illumined by the lamp.

There could be no mistake, or deviation, or wavering.

If the holder of the weapon were gifted with ordinary eyesight, he could be quite positive that where the light fell, there could he strike.

No wonder, then, that Lord Roberts was eager to try this

portentous arm under its own peculiar conditions—for the darker the night, the more effective it became—now that Lord Wolseley fully approved of his telegraphed resolution to attack Paris immediately.

There were no guns of position with the British army, for the reason already detailed—that a regular siege of the French capital at this stage of the war must have savoured of the grotesque.

On the fifth day after the memorable sortie, when Lord Roberts had received intelligence of the sailing from Hamburg of 50,000 men of the Duke's force, and the whole of the recently arrived contingent from the United States and Canada, he gave orders for a strong artillery attack to be made on the French positions dominated by the Forts de Cormeilles, de Cotillons, and de Franconville.

To engage in a duel with the magnificent ordnance contained in those fortresses would, of course, only mean the annihilation of the British field-guns. But by constant change of position, by utilising the cover of trees in the well-wooded ground on the left bank of the Seine, and by constant effort to discount the range of the stationary monsters in the fixed batteries, the British gunners were able to avoid considerable loss whilst very materially annoying the French infantry.

Two British divisions were also sent to the front to keep things moving, and when he heard the news General Saussier exclaimed, whilst being lifted on to his horse :

“ St. Denis, then ! It is well. These English will be butchered.”

In the north, the French army was agog with excitement. Train after train conveyed troops along the railway of the Grand Ceinture, and an imposing army of soldiers quickly gathered at Enghien, behind the fort now intermittently engaged by the British artillery.

Lord Roberts paid not the slightest heed to the proceeding in this quarter.

At midday he inspected the two Special Service Corps, which were drawn up on some level land close to the Seine at Poissy.

He was fully satisfied with the appearance and constitution of the twenty strong brigades into which they were divided. They were soon dismissed from the parade and advised to take complete rest until 8.30 p.m., when a good meal would be served to them. A general muster was ordered for 9.30.

It was eleven o'clock before the sounds of continuous firing by the French pickets at St. Germain en Laye apprised the defenders of any move towards the south.

And it was here that the British received their first convincing impression of the terrible effect of the new rifle. When they came to close quarters with a French division they found that instead of indulging in the desultory and uncertain nature of fighting in the dark, they could act with a precision that could not possibly be attained during the hours of daylight.

Not only did every missile lodge in the body of an opponent, but there was no wild and indiscriminate firing; ammunition was not thrown away, and effective response was impossible, as the piercing rays from the lamps blinded their opponents whenever they strove to come to close quarters.

To say that the French were seized with panic would be to do an injustice to brave and determined men. They were simply bewildered, amazed, unable to grasp the significance of the infernal device which smote them so infallibly, yet offered no tangible explanation of its frightful qualities to their scattered senses.

Regiments simply melted away before these demoniac rays that brought death the moment they were sighted.

A hasty retreat behind the Fort de Marly was not so much a terrified rout as a yielding to the unseen and inevitable. Men could not stand before this unknown element in warfare; they either fled or died.

Prior to the attack the Commander-in-Chief had most care-

fully revised the complete scheme of operations with the divisional generals and their brigadiers. The first division was charged with the capture, if possible, of the formidable Fort de Marly, with its seven huge batteries. Special brigades were told off to deal with the two strong redoubts on its left and the battery in rear.

The second division, led by Lieutenant-General Alleyne, when assured of the probable success of Massy's undertaking, in which it bore no part, was to march with all speed over the next five miles and attack the Battery and Fort of St. Cyr, the Batteries des Bouviers, and the two Forts de Buc.

By field telegraph the Commander-in-Chief should be constantly apprised of the progress of events, and 200,000 men were ready at midnight to march off to complete the occupation of all positions taken from the enemy.

Everything, of course, in this remarkable programme depended upon the demoralising influence of the new arm, but it was not to be expected that the troops could unaided climb bastions, cross outworks, and *glacis*, or swim ditches.

Each brigade carried with it a large number of light but solid gangways, constructed upon the principle of a fire-escape. With these the broadest moats and the highest walls could be surmounted either on the level or at a steep gradient. The wheels were so arranged that one gangway could cross over another, whilst three of these novel scaling-ladders, placed side by side, formed a fairly broad road.

The first experiment was made with the detached battery lying three miles north-west of the Fort de Marly.

It was taken whilst its guns were still roaring forth their opening message of defiance.

There was no earthly chance of a reasonable defence being made. No portion of a human body could show itself on bastion or in embrasure, but an ounce of lead was promptly planted therein.

A company of Zouaves flung themselves desperately down

an escarpment to prevent a lodgment being effected by one of the scaling-ladders. They were shot down to a man within half a minute.

The first real difficulty presented itself when the leading division reached the precincts of the gigantic Fort de Marly.

Here a number of search-lights swept the landscape and gave the gunners an opportunity to make good practice at a distance.

The British loss was severe during the advance, but the moment that the attackers got within striking distance the position was at once reversed.

Acting under the orders of their officers, the men devoted their attention solely to the apparatus of the search-lights. When these were turned upon the assailants, both officers and men were promptly rendered powerless by the glare, but from precisely the same cause a strong shadow was cast on the machine for the benefit of those not within its radius, and a few telling shots sufficed to knock it to pieces.

Thenceforth the work degenerated into mere slaughter.

The hopelessness of the business infected even the bravest spirits in the French army. From out the gloom a man suddenly perceived a jet of bright light dart towards him.

It flashed for an instant upon his breast, or arm, or head, or thigh, and quicker than consciousness itself came the dull crunch of a projectile, the vivid ray disappeared in the void whence it sprung, whilst the surrounding darkness deepened into insensibility, perchance into eternity.

So sudden and awful were the different attacks, and so unexampled in the rapidity of their final achievement, that General Saussier might rave and storm as he chose at his telegraphists—they could seldom get a second answer from the locality indicated by the first message which announced the advance of the British.

From the Fort de Marly several communications of a vague and conflicting nature were received, as the extent of

its area demanded a protracted conflict before it could be occupied even under the weird and uncanny conditions of this unprecedented conflict between helpless humanity and implacable science.

"The English are attacking in force, but are suffering heavy loss under our splendid fire," clicked the telegraph.

Five minutes later: "Regret to inform you that No. 3 Battery and the Moscow Redoubt have been captured."

"What folly is this?" roared the astounded General. "Captured? Is it an affair of pigeons, then? Ask that madman to leave the instrument."

"It is but too true," came the reply in answer to a furious question. "Colonel Berthier attempted their recapture, but survivors say that everyone is bewitched. Nos. 1, 2, and 5 Batteries have fallen. The Commandant is here. He wishes to say——"

Silence.

Never again did General Saussier get word or sign from the superb fort that controlled the wide plateau of Marly, save the stern summons sent to him at dawn, when its guns were turned upon Mont Valerien and Meudon.

The telephone from Versailles was even more dramatic.

Although the chief of the staff of the Fifth Army Corps was in personal communication with his leader, he could say naught of value. The noise of the fighting to the north could be heard plainly enough, but the officer was quite unable to explain the sudden cessation of the big guns at Marly, or the wholly unaccountable collapse of its associated batteries and redoubts.

General Saussier was at St. Denis, many miles from the scene of action, and he was nearly beside himself with rage. He thundered fierce questions and fiercer denunciations along the wire, but his auditor could only answer that he had sent off many mounted messengers to make inquiries.

At last he assured the chief that there could be no doubt concerning the fate of St. Germain and Marly. They were

held by the British, but how or why this unwarrantable collapse had occurred he could not tell.

Ha ! more news. Versailles itself was attacked. Now he could promise precise intelligence. There was heavy firing at the front. Troops were being hurried up in support. They were so numerous and so skilfully disposed that the British must be hurled back.

What was this ? A retreat ! Yes, a disgraceful panic. Men rushed by saying that the English fought with bottled lightning.

Sorry, but he must really go outside and take his position with the troops.

He did not replace the receivers upon the switches, and his perplexed inferior, now quite dumfounded with surprise, plainly heard the sounds of musketry, the cries of the combatants, and the indescribable noise of conflict.

But these indications of passing events soon died away, and Versailles was thenceforth mute.

Saussier thought he must certainly be losing his wits when in rapid succession came news of irreparable disaster at Bouviers, de Buc, Bois d'Arcis, and Satory.

It was now almost dawn. Surely something could be done. Were the unparalleled fortifications of Paris made of gossamer, then, that they fell thus before the breath of the invader's nostrils ? He must go personally and ascertain the precise extent and significance of the night's transactions.

A special train brought the French leader and his staff by the inner circle railway to the Fort d'Issy, and here they awaited the growing daylight with an impatience and dismay ever heightened by the receipt of disjointed reports, all couched in the phraseology of unexplained but complete disaster.

Troops might gallop, or march, or be carried by train across Paris from St. Denis, or Pantin, or Vincennes, pouring in seemingly countless multitudes towards the south-

west—when they reached Châtillon and Vanvres they only found themselves subjected to a pitiless hail of lead from fortifications which yesterday were the brass bosses upon their apparently impenetrable shield.

And if one night of mysterious horror could achieve so much, what might not the next witness?

General Saussier hoped that his self-torturing questions would be answered by a friendly bullet.

CHAPTER XLI.

PARIS TAKEN.

“WILL you not sleep, sir, for a little while?” said a member of Lord Roberts’s staff, as he gazed anxiously at the deep lines and haggard expression in the Chief’s face during a momentary lull in the furious artillery duel that had been in progress all day between the Forts de Buc and d’Issy.

They were seated in a bomb-proof building within the first-named fortification, and had been eagerly scrutinising a complete plan of the southern defences of Paris which was found in the Commandant’s quarters.

Long had they pondered over different expedients, until the English General’s weary eyes, which he had not closed in rest for thirty-six hours, refused for the time to carry to his active brain the meaning of the lines and dots and shaded sections that signified so much, yet were so complex in their minuteness.

“Try and lie down for at least an hour,” urged his sympathetic companion. “You may break down to-night, and think what that means to us.”

Lord Roberts smiled—so pleasantly that for an instant the shadow of overpowering responsibility was driven from his brow.

“It is very good of you, Everett,” he said. “I will follow your advice if you tell me what rest means.”

Rest, with his iron grip on Paris, with 400,000 British troops even now making final preparations for the supreme effort of the campaign, with half a million of frenzied oppo-

nents bracing every nerve to repel the blow which they knew must fall that night—rest, with the thoughts of the civilised world centred upon the undertaking to which he was committed—rest under such conditions could only be found in reckless abandonment to all-engrossing work.

To strive to court sleep would be but to yield to maddening anxiety.

So Colonel Everett did not press the point, nor did he attempt a definition.

After shading his eyes with his hand for a brief space, Lord Roberts continued :

“ Saussier, of course, is cramming every available man into Southern Paris between the Seine at Point du Jour and the Point National.”

“ That may be regarded as certain,” assented the other.

“ It is the best thing he can do in our interest.”

“ May I ask why you think so, sir,” said Colonel Everett, somewhat surprised by the remark.

“ Because his troops will learn more easily the full details of last night’s operations. What should you think, Everett, if you knew that when darkness fell you would be attacked by a courageous enemy whose mere coming meant death, by some mysterious device, to every combatant encountered ? ”

“ Well, sir,” said that officer with a laugh, “ for my own part I should look to you for orders.”

The Commander-in-Chief waved aside the compliment.

“ Under such circumstances,” he replied, “ I fear that my only plan would be to head the first regiment detailed to meet the assault.”

“ If that be Saussier’s notion,” said Everett, “ our men will oblige him readily, for he is as big as the side of a house. They can’t miss him.”

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lieutenant-General Alleyne.

“ I came along to assure you that the Special Service Corps is eager to be at work again. My chief difficulty has

been to keep out the crowds of volunteers to fill our small casualty list, and Massy tells me——’

“Why are n’t you in bed?” demanded Lord Roberts suddenly.

“In bed!” The divisional leader spoke as though he had never heard of such a locality.

“Yes. Be off at once and get some hours’ sleep. A nice mess we shall be in if you are knocked up to-night. And tell Massy the same thing. Not another word, please. See me here at ten.”

His lordship evidently feared that his companion might say something when Alleyne had retired, for he said peremptorily: “Get me the parade slates, Colonel Everett, from every division to hand, and ask the Intelligence Department to clearly mark on a sketch map the present location of every brigade.”

Colonel Everett met the Adjutant-General outside.

“Don’t say a word to the Chief about his looking tired,” he whispered, “or he ’ll snap your head off.”

The Adjutant-General got safely away, and was succeeded by Harington.

Now, Lord Roberts had a soft place in his heart for the handsome young guardsman, from whom all traces of his recent disablement had disappeared, and as he really felt thoroughly fatigued, he said, graciously enough:

“Tell me, Harington, what you would recommend. I cannot sleep, but I want a pick-me-up.”

Teddy looked at his superior and noted his utterly worn appearance. As usual, he came straight to the point.

“If I were you, sir,” he said, “I would have a good wash.”

The Chief was delighted with the notion. It had never struck him. By rummaging around they discovered the materials, and when a blissful moment of relief had come from a liberal application of cold water, his lordship suddenly cried:

“Had another letter from the girl to-day?”

Harington was ready this time.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "Irene is a marvellous woman. I don't believe anyone but herself could have got a note through from the hospital dépôt to-day, or even found out where I was. But it turned up all right an hour ago."

"Did she say anything special?"

"Only that she hoped that I would not be hurt during the street fighting to-night in Paris."

"Ah, she thinks we 'll get there, then. Anything else?"

"Nothing of general interest, sir."

If anxiety blended with confidence and happy augury were thus to be found within the British lines, a very different state of affairs obtained in the beleaguered city.

Four of the five great railway termini on the north bank of the Seine were crowded with terrified fugitives. Pretence was now thrown to the winds, and distracted men, resolved personally to stay and give their lives in defence of the capital, were nevertheless madly endeavouring to dispatch their loved ones to places of safety.

Appalling scenes occurred at the Gare de l'Est and Gare de Vincennes, which were thronged with frenzied multitudes, and matters became so serious that at last the railway authorities imperatively demanded military protection, and refused to send out any more trains.

These things became known in the Chamber of Deputies, which, with the Senate, was in perpetual session, and Ministers quailed before the furious interpolations hurled at them from all quarters, without order or decorum or semblance of debate.

At last M. Bourgeois managed to gain a hearing. He had the courage of his convictions, and uttered that which was in all men's hearts, but which none had hitherto dared to speak.

"M. le Président," he cried in ringing tones, "France has been led into abysmal depths of folly by the incapacity and

wilful arrogance of her self-styled rulers. This is a war of individuals, not of nations. These soldiers thundering at our gates are the avengers of a crime ; our citizens, who are being shot down in the streets by their own brothers, are the sad victims of a ministerial blunder. Shall no one save France ? Is my life to be taken as a traitor because I proclaim these awful truths ? Be it so, I will die cheerfully if therefore my voice shall prevail in the cause of my oppressed and distracted country ! ”

A fierce outburst of denunciation drowned his speech, but he stood coldly impassive through it all, and it was a highly significant fact that when a member of the Extreme Left rose and moved the adjournment of the Chamber until 9 p.m.—it being then six o'clock—there was hardly a dissident.

The representatives of the people wished to take counsel with each other before they committed themselves in open debate.

When the House reassembled, it was noted that neither M. Bourgeois nor M. Hanotaux was present, which was odd, for between such antagonists *rapprochement* was surely impossible. It was even rumoured that they had met to fight a duel forthwith, but reasonable men scouted the suggestion.

Meanwhile some comfort was taken from the sensible appeal made by a subordinate Minister. He asked members to give their support to the Government at least until the morrow. The Chamber would not adjourn throughout the night, and half-hourly bulletins of a thoroughly authentic nature would be issued.

All knew what this statement signified. An attack was expected that night. If it was successfully repelled the Government would still strive to grapple with the situation. If not—ah, who could say what would happen ?

General Saussier was more energetic than ever.

He felt sure that the Porte de Versailles would be the ultimate objective of the British advance, and he placed the dis-

trict between the Fort d'Issy and Vanvres in such a complete state of defence that even under the demoniac conditions of the previous night's fighting, anything like a sustained assault would be out of the question. Still uninformed as to the exact nature of the weapon used by the English—which, as Lord Roberts surmised, was discussed with bated breath by every human being in Paris—he realised its properties sufficiently to endeavour to minimise it by preparing huge bonfires at every available point, and these were to be lighted at the first sign of an attack in force.

When, therefore, two divisions of the British army came in touch with the French outposts a little before midnight some very desperate and determined fighting took place without any definite result being achieved.

The Chamber of Deputies were cheered by the report that their soldiers were holding the position with splendid effect, and Lord Roberts was almost unmanned by the knowledge that his brave troops were suffering so grievously with no apparent hope of success.

Their mission was to spend themselves and be spent in the hopeless task of striving to carry an impregnable position, but they were in reality contributing as fully towards the ultimate victory as were the gallant comrades whose happier lot it was to first surmount the inner line of the fortifications.

For Alleyne's and Massy's Special Service Corps were now marching swiftly towards the real point of the attack, through the suburb of Montrouge, with its triple roads to Paris by the Portes de Châtillon, d'Orléans, and de Montrouge.

News of their progress reached General Saussier at his station in the Rue de Vaugirard shortly before one o'clock.

Three small forts *en route* had been captured with the same exasperating ease that had accompanied the attack on their mighty neighbours twenty-four hours earlier.

Quick to scent the new danger, the French Commander-

in-Chief galloped along the Boulevard Lefèvre and Boulevard Brune, followed by his staff. Collecting all the available troops in the locality, and ordering two divisions which were bivouacked in the Parc Montsouris to come up at the double, he flung open the three gates and poured thousands of men into the congeries of houses and gardens that make up this well-known suburb.

In so doing he unwittingly created the very conditions desired by his adversaries.

The astounding effects of the electric rifle, to call it by its common but inaccurate title, were soon demonstrated when a hand-to-hand struggle commenced.

At Vanvres and Issy, where the combatants were equal in arms and valour, the loss was heavy on both sides; and, if anything, the French had the better of the fray owing to the strength of their position.

But in Montrouge the odds were entirely in favour of the British. Strive to picture what it means in a battle when every shot fired on one side cannot fail to maim or kill an opponent. There was no opportunity for faulty marksmanship. The Englishmen were now so wholly imbued with belief in their invincible weapon that they were as cool and methodical in action as though they were going through the manual and firing exercise on a barrack square. There was no hurry or confusion, or indiscriminate firing. The more nervous their foes the more rapidly they fell. Line after line of determined assailants withered before the all-devouring rays of piercing light. Men were mortally struck, they knew not how or whence. They strove madly to burst through the deadly zone of death that environed them, but a planet might as well seek to depart from its predestined path through space.

Hours afterwards the majority of the attacking force found that their hands were badly blistered with the heat of the rifle barrels, but of this they knew nothing during the stress of the fight.

General Saussier, impetuously urging on his men to stem the steady progress of the British, was unconsciously giving effect to the views expressed by Lord Roberts in the case of the Fort de Buc. He was now convinced that the sustained conflict at Vanvres was but a feint, and that the real attack was being delivered here.

But he also realised that the end had come, so he spurred onward his powerful charger, whilst he shrilly vociferated: "*En avant, mes enfants, en avant.*" Better to die in front of the walls of Paris than live to see his beloved city again occupied by the foe.

The momentary glare of a French volley revealed his gigantic frame to the eyes of an officer of the 42d, who was directing the fire of his men.

"Shoot the horse!" he shouted in the ear of a brawny Scot, who was about to cover the General's colossal frame. The order came just in time. A second later the powerful animal which carried the Governor of Paris jumped into the air, with a bullet in his brain, and crashed to the earth with his unwieldy rider.

It was sufficient. When General Saussier regained his breath and his senses two hours later, he was able to sample some Scotch whisky, and take an intelligent interest in the mechanism of the new rifle, which was explained to him by an old acquaintance, Major Harington, ex-junior military attaché at the British Embassy.

Within a few minutes after the fall of the French Commander-in-Chief, the Colonels of the 42d Highlanders, the Royal Fusiliers and the 18th, Royal Irish, which regiments respectively led the three avenues of approach to the walls, perceived that the psychological moment for a resolute advance had arrived.

Unable to communicate with or see each other, they were individually led at the same time to form this conclusion by the obvious demoralisation of the troops to which they were opposed.

For, truth to tell, the incident of Rouen had repeated itself.

The best soldiers in the world are the most difficult to control when reason and discipline alike fail to hold men to their duty.

Stupefied, frantic, demoralised by the supernatural method of the British attack, the battalions which General Saussier had hurried into Montrouge were now rushing back into the city by the three gates through which they made their exit. When the guards made an effort to raise the drawbridges and barricade the double entrance to each gate, they were ruthlessly cut down by the infuriated masses of men who saw their only avenue of escape from death thus threatened.

Heedless now of the flying enemy, the three British regiments raced along the Chaussées to find their progress practically unhindered, and each set up a wild yell of triumph as they found themselves within the walls.

Which of the three was the first to enter Paris is a question that cannot be determined here. It formed a fruitful subject for discussion at mess dinners for decades. In the canteens of Aldershot and the Curragh it led to many a darkened optic and damaged nose. The newspapers of the respective countries vehemently declared that national prejudice alone prevented the others from admitting the just claims of England, Scotland, or Ireland, as the case might be, to the distinguished honour of having first gained the interior of the city.

Even Lord Roberts shied at a definite decision.

"The leading regiments of General Massy's division," ran the words of his famous dispatch, "entered Paris simultaneously, *so far as can be learned*, about 1.25 a.m."

This nice point did not trouble the Chamber of Deputies when the news came by telephone, from the Station de Montrouge, that the Porte d'Orléans ("a tremendous argument in our favour," said the Fusiliers afterwards) had been

forced, and that British troops (undoubtedly a mixed force of Highlanders and Irishmen) were even then advancing along the Avenue du Maine.

But a check was now experienced.

Lord Roberts had lain his plans entirely upon the presumption that the assault would be effective. What would happen were it otherwise, he never asked himself, for that way madness lay.

When Major Harington taxed the splendid powers of his hunter to the utmost in the delirious race back to the spot where he knew he should find the Commander-in-Chief, the latter was even then superintending the advance of the relief divisions.

He kept on pouring brigade after brigade into Paris, and sent Harington back as quickly as he had come to ascertain if a flanking movement towards the Porte de Versailles had been efficiently carried out, whilst other aides were dispatched with imperative orders to Generals Massy and Alleyne to entrench themselves in the streets between the Boulevard d'Italie and the Rue de Vanvres.

So implicitly did Lord Roberts trust his lieutenants, and so important did he deem the work of expediting the march of the reserves, that it was not until 3 a.m. that he personally entered the city by the Porte de Montrouge.

Stubborn and persistent street fighting had been in progress during the interval. As the first faint streaks of daylight rose over Paris the position was still critical and dubious. The whole of the fortifications from the Seine at Point du Jour to the Porte d'Orléans were in the possession of the British, but the men were almost exhausted by the heavy marching and the strain of the fight, whilst fresh troops were still swarming across the river from the north and north-east.

When his lordship reached the front at the Gare de Sceaux it was more than probable that the advancing day would witness another big battle, and the outlook was anything but

promising. Indeed, were the issue left to the army, France was still defiant and even dangerous.

But other elements were at work, and in the ultimate clash of events they predominated.

At 2.30 a.m. the Government had resigned. A Ministry of Conciliation was hastily formed, and at 3.15 a.m. an officer bearing a flag of truce rode down the Boulevard Raspail bearing a letter from M. Bourgeois, countersigned by the President of the Republic, which he handed to Lord Roberts.

"For the sake of our people and of yours," read this brief message, "let there be peace."

"Is M. Bourgeois the Premier?" said his lordship.

"Within the hour," was the reply.

"Tell him, then, that I will meet him here within half-an-hour," said the British Commander-in-Chief. "I will then communicate to him the demands of England, if he be empowered to accept them."

In less than the allotted time, the President and M. Bourgeois both made their appearance.

It was no season for diplomatic fencing or laboured civility.

"My instructions are definite and explicit," said Lord Roberts, when the two notable Frenchmen were introduced to him. "I can offer no terms save those of unconditional surrender."

"I can only ask you to spare France," said the President. "She is not to blame. Punish her rulers if you will, for I am chief of them."

"Unconditional surrender means anything or nothing," exclaimed M. Bourgeois. "Who shall fix a limit to its significance?"

"England and America," replied Lord Roberts.

"An honourable tribunal. I accept," cried the President.

"France accepts," said M. Bourgeois.

And whilst the fateful words still rang in the ears of the British General, there came through the open doorway of the

room in which the meeting was held the fitful sounds of distant firing towards the Champs de Mars, where the intelligence of the armistice had not yet penetrated.

They were the last tokens of warfare between Christian races, the dying cries of the horrific demon which had waged so deadly and so prolonged a conflict with civilisation.

The war was ended.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW ENGLAND RECEIVED THE NEWS.

IT was a clear calm morning, one of those serene mornings of September which are the glory of the English climate. London looked cool and fresh, and there was a joyousness in the air as her citizens cracked their million eggs, took their innumerable 'buses, and rolled by devious routes from all points of the compass to the City. There was an omen in the placid beauty of the day, did they but know it. For the war was at last over, and peace—universal peace—reigned over the entire world. The last echoes of the cannon had died away, and no man raised up his sword against his brother.

But shortly after nine o'clock extraordinary excitement convulsed every newspaper office in Fleet Street. News editors lost their calmness, foremen printers turned pale and trembled, and even the phlegmatic compositor affected agitation. For a telegram of supreme importance had just arrived, and the battle of armed men was changed now into a battle of journals. Who should be the first to announce the news to an unsuspecting world ?

" England is saved ! " exclaimed the too impressionable sub-editor of the *Evening News* as he read, in feverish excitement, the tantalising tape.

" Never you mind about England being saved," observed his superior firmly, throwing away the end of his eighteenth cigarette, " what *you* 've got to do is to scoop the *Sun* ! "

It was a hard, unsympathetic saying, but it was business. And everyone proceeded to scoop.

Who shall describe the contest in all its alternations of hope and despair, its fluctuations of failure and success? If the *Sun* was first at Piccadilly Circus, the *News* reached Tottenham Court Road three minutes before. It was the *Echo's* boast that the inhabitants of Shepherd's Bush would have remained unenlightened for hours save for itself, whilst the pallid *Star* gleamed proudly and solitary at Clapham Junction. But no one, other than a judge trained in Jubilee handicaps and Royal Hunt Cups, could determine which newspaper first rounded Cheapside, or touched Charing Cross, or triumphant gained the Bank—although it was the boast of the *News* that it accomplished this last feat by half a neck.

Nor did it matter. The machines could not print fast enough to meet the demand. As first was heard the miraculous cry : " 'The Fall of Paris,' " there came a shock of bewilderment which was followed by a wild rush for the papers. With shaking hands and beating hearts, the excited crowds seized them and tore them wildly open. It was true! There, beneath prodigious headings that sprawled half down the column, was the brief but all sufficing telegram.

" Last night Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, under cover of a feint towards the Seine, made a strong attack upon the southern lines of the fortifications of Paris. The attempt was completely successful, and early this morning the city fell into the hands of the British troops. The President of the Republic has capitulated, and there is now cessation of hostilities."

Perhaps—in Paris—but in triumphant London there was fierce fighting for the newspapers. No one gave heed to the price demanded. Shillings, half-crowns, even sovereigns were tossed to the happy newsboys by exultant citizens who now learned, for the first time, that England's power was supreme and her mighty empire safe beyond possibility of attack. As the news rushed along, the tension of public excitement became stronger and stronger. The wildest evi-

dences of rejoicing were to be observed. Everything was forgotten, all business laid aside, no word spoken save on this marvellous and glorious news which breathed peace and prosperity once more upon a stricken and suffering people.

There was complete and absolute derangement of traffic and business. No one wanted to go anywhere. No one wanted to do anything. Where each man learned the news, there he stayed in eager discussion and warm felicitations with such strangers as he met. The approaches to the City were thronged with crowds reckless of time and place, feeling nothing but the pulsations of a common patriotism and the joy of a national deliverance.

News is sometimes laggard in its flight, and with broken wing flits feebly to distant suburbs. But in grave affairs there is something mysterious in its incredible speed. London was not long in feeling to its uttermost parts the thrilling ecstasy of the glorious intelligence. That modern Perseus, the ubiquitous newsboy, borne along by train or cart, or rushing on bicycle, woke up Kensington from her dreams, pierced the slumbers of St. John's Wood, fluttered the placid bosom of Brixton, and, even in the indefinable solemnity of Finsbury and New Barnet, brought irregular and disturbing agitations. The tumultuous swirl of excitement in the City sent forth its ripples to the outermost regions, and in a moment the six millions of greater London were convulsed with the same delirium.

Words are vain and ineffectual to paint certain moments of high-pitched emotion. Nor can they describe the strange, restless, inexplicable mood which drove from every suburb and every district the people of the capital into its main thoroughfares. It was as if to be away from the burning centre of national rejoicing were unbearable. There was a fierce desire to take an individual share in public demonstration.

For this unwonted thing had at last occurred. London so

torn and divided, so scattered in its parts, so separated in its interests, so lacking in a common centre of public life—with every township regardless of its neighbour, each street indifferent to the next—like some grotesque animal that has a hundred nerve centres, each self-sustaining and independent in a large measure upon the main seat of life—this inorganic city had at last become organic and homogeneous. All its private interests were fused by the fervent heat of patriotism into a common feeling. Distinctions and differences were lost. The single impulse was to gather together, to express in one vast note the cry of mutual exultation.

Thus there flowed into the centre of London great crowds anxious to catch the enthusiasm of others and to express their own. Every face was bright; it was more than a happy city, it was a happy nation.

Beyond all, the Mall—that noble boulevard that stretches through St. James's Park—was crowded with expectant throngs. Before Buckingham Palace a dense mass of people waited patiently with excited speech and much cheering, each person eager but contented, awaiting some sign of royal recognition.

And such sign was not wanting. When the Ministers had met as hurriedly as might be, and with heartfelt thankfulness heard the news—oppressed in some cases by an emotion that was almost overpowering—the leading members of the Council of National Defence drove to the Palace to give official tidings to the Queen.

Hence it was that at twelve o'clock those who occupied the roadway and stretched far down the lovely avenue of the Mall, had the satisfaction of seeing Her Majesty appear upon the balcony with the Prince upon her right and Lord Wolseley upon her left, whilst around her were her Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, and Mr. Balfour. Deafening cheers rent the air, renewed again and again, as with a bright smile Her Majesty bowed to her people. It was a fresh evidence of her graciousness that she did not forget the man to

whom the splendid victory was mainly due, and as she gave her hand to the Commander-in-Chief, who kissed it respectfully, redoubled enthusiasm prevailed, until the incident, almost overburdened with the strain of excitement, was terminated by the withdrawal of the royal party.

During the day there was no business, there was no pleasure. People forgot there were matinées. They recked not of tickets bought and unused. It was impossible to subdue the feelings of personal emotion by commonplace activity. Everyone roamed through the streets and discussed in public places or met in drawing-room and studio, full of the single topic, all else forgotten.

And so the day sped. There was sadness, no doubt, in the purlieus of Soho, but it was manifested with undue emphasis abroad. When a Frenchman made his appearance, the good-humoured Englishman treated him with a consideration that did him infinite credit.

Sometimes the temptation of a little badinage was too strong to be resisted. A distinguished French *savant* made his appearance in St. James's Restaurant, and was moodily drinking his claret when a couple of healthy, hearty Britons took up their places at his side.

M. Trochu—that was his name—sighed deeply, and, after a few diffident glances at his companions, asked in hesitating tones and in broken accents :

“ Is it, gentlemen, that you can tell me vot ze condizions are of truce in my beloved Paris ? ”

His voice trembled, and there was something pathetic in his earnestness which even touched the hearts of his listeners. But the devil of mischief sprang in, and one of them answered :

“ We have only heard a few details, sir, and they do not amount to much; but it appears that the Bridge of Austerlitz is to be demolished and the Eiffel Tower torn down. But, of course, you can build others in their place.”

M. Trochu turned pale.

" Oh, *Dieu!* " he exclaimed. " What next ? "

" The Venus de Milo and your Elgin Marble are, of course, to be removed to the British Museum, and it is proposed to take down and re-erect the Church of St. Germain L'Auxerrois in Brixton. "

The Frenchman groaned and hid his face in his hands.

" Still it's a very old church and not a very convenient one, " continued the other. " As some compensation Lord Roberts has decided to apportion the Champs Elysées into building lots, of which the rents will go entire to the French treasury. "

M. Trochu looked up, and there was a wild madness in his eyes.

" I am very sorry to distress you, sir, " said the Englishman gently. " I will say no more. Pray, pardon me. "

" No, no—the trut, the whole fatal trut—conceal nothing. Oh, *mon Dieu*, let me know ze worst ! "

" I really don't think there 's anything else, unless—no, stay, it is said that the Vendôme Column will be set up on the Thames Embankment, and that the British Government have not quite decided whether they will erect the Arc de Triomphe in Hyde Park or in Waterloo Place ! "

It was too much, and the poor Frenchman, overcome, heedless of comment and consumed with the overwhelming sense of his country's shame, broke down, great tears coursing down his cheeks.

Seeing this, the other Englishman interposed.

" Pardon my friend, " he said, " he cannot resist a jest. All this is pure invention. Paris, the beautiful, the mother of cities, is safe, be assured, from English spoliation. And permit me, sir, to drink to the gallantry and chivalry of the great nation whom it is England's fortune to have beaten. "

A marvellous change came over the Frenchman's face. He raised his glass unsteadily, drank to his tormentors, and hastily left the place.

Next morning there appeared in one of the daily papers a

poem from the pen of the Poet Laureate, who on this occasion at last succeeded in proving that he could leave the turgid and the commonplace, and adopt a note of sincerity and feeling. Part of it ran thus :

O England, tender mother of the fallen,
O England, scourge of tyranny and wrong,
Thy head is raised imperious 'midst the nations,
Thy step is measured to the victor's song !

For, England, thou art consecrate to Freedom,
With all the passion of a zealot's vow,
The flower of Pity blossometh in thy bosom,
The star of Victory is on thy brow !

Thou whisperest thy secrets to the forests,
They bear them swiftly o'er the conquered sea,
And far-off peoples slumbering in their thralldom,
Awake to find themselves secure and free.

Upon the bleak and sterile lands thou treadest,
And straight the verdure springeth round thy feet,
Thy touch is magical upon the waters,
Thy hand enchanteth whatsoe'er it meet.

Beloved England, never shall the madness
Of patricidal nations fall on *thee*.
For, O my country, even are thy watchwords
Love, happiness, peace, justice, liberty !

And over all England there was rejoicing. Who shall say whether the commercial splendour of the great cities, with its prodigality and display, was any more sincere than the bucolic thanksgiving of the rustic, who, bearing in his hands the simple product of the soil he cultured, laid it reverently upon the altar of his village church ?

For he, beyond others, had suffered, if not in privations which in his low state could not be endured, at least in the lives of those beloved of him. Many a gallant son, the hope and pride of some poor country farm, lay cold and dead, or

mouldered quite away in some far-off land. As of old, the soil of England had yielded up its treasure, and lay smitten beneath the cruel scourge of war.

Yet there was no repining, for these brave men had died not alone to save their country, but by their blood to secure peace for generations yet to come. There was at last finality to man's inhumanity to man. The *Newcastle Chronicle*, in a leading article, observed :

" One thrilling thought remains. The cannon has spoken its last word. In all the savage incoherence of its cruel, inarticulate speech it has roared its ghastly message from century to century, writing its meaning in the writhing bodies of its victims, or tracing it along the blackened ruins of fair cities. For man deceived himself when he laughed at the childish legends of the past. He has always had his fabled monster, the insatiate, gluttonous devourer of his kind, and, with much more readiness than did ever those afflicted people of Crete, yielded up his annual tribute to its maw. But gun and cannon and bayonet and shell are silenced at last. In future ages when new generations see in their museums these horrid implements, they will indeed wonder that the nineteenth century should be so self-deluded as to deem itself civilised."

Solemn indeed was the meeting of Parliament when the news that the war was over was formally announced in broken utterance by the Leader of the House. There was not one whose heart was not too full for words; but, by due observance, thanks were devoutly offered to Divine Providence, and a brief resolution of congratulation to Her Majesty, as representing in her person the Kingdom of Great Britain, was moved and carried in silence.

An early day was set aside for national thanksgiving. A chain of bonfires throughout the whole country was so contrived that, upon a signal raised high above the trees on Windsor Hill, Britain was set aglow with triumphant blaze. Not a village but had its feast, and rich and poor alike joined in the joyous celebration.

But the most imposing spectacle was the service held in St. Paul's Cathedral. Crowded beyond conception were the streets of London to see pass by the illustrious procession. The Queen, with the different members of her family, both Houses of Parliament, the municipal bodies of London, and as many of the citizens themselves as could be crowded into the lofty scaffoldings that were built upon every available space in the great building, joined in common adoration.

And to this enormous and unique gathering the eloquent Bishop of Ripon preached a touching and powerful sermon.

Dr. Boyd Carpenter is the silver-tongued orator of the Church of England. His is the gift of speech that goes to men's hearts, that appeals alike to intellect and sentiment, that convinces, not only by reason of its fervent sincerity, but by its scholarly, well-ordered, fluent thoughtfulness.

For this unparalleled occasion he had, with more than ordinary care, prepared an ornate discourse. It was clear and cogent in his mind, and although he felt the gravity of his task he never was more conscious of his powers and primed with his subject than when he entered the pulpit of St. Paul's on this momentous day.

But as he gazed round upon the assembled multitude an overwhelming sense of awe held him as in a trance. He realised now that which he could not realise in the solitude of his study. It was his duty to give utterance to the first canticle of a new era, to note a fresh departure in the work of human deliverance inaugurated those long centuries ago by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, to proclaim aloud to the people that on the threshold of the twentieth century had been accomplished the destruction of the chief foe of civilisation.

The undertaking appalled him, so he knelt and solemnly asked for guidance and help.

And as he prayed, the whole of his set sermon fled from his memory. But there came to him with thrilling significance the words of Isaiah : " And I looked, and there was

none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me. For He said: 'Surely they are my people.' "

Then the Bishop rose to his feet, and taking his text from these ringing verses of the prophet, he delivered an extempore sermon that created a profound sensation among his thousands of hearers, and won world-wide renown when it was read in the newspapers subsequently. •

He justified and glorified the action of England and the United States, and he denounced any other course than that which they had taken as forfeiting the forethought which Providence had seen fit to bestow upon them.

Their mission was one of emancipation, and freedom could neither be won nor bestowed until the demon of militarism had been slain in his own den. In such a struggle individual interests must be ignored, and the collective good alone sought.

"Whilst the air yet throbs with the lamentations of the widow and the orphan," said the Bishop, "I hear a grand canticle of thanksgiving, swelling ever louder and more joyous, thundering towards us from the hidden paths of the future. It is the song of praise of generations yet unborn, and in that marvellous diapason the cries of present grief are wholly overborne."

Unfortunately it is impossible here to afford more than the merest outline of Dr. Boyd Carpenter's unexampled panegyric of the war and its results. One passage alone may be cited as a specimen of the rest.

"This campaign has often been termed a war of patriotism," he said. "The phrase is well meant, but it does not go far enough. It was, in the widest sense, a war of belief. Once before, within the lives of the elder amongst us, have we seen such a war. Brothers fought with brothers and fathers with sons to determine, by the last dread arbitrament left to man, whether or not slavery should find a place where

the English tongue was spoken and the Bible ruled the conduct of men's lives. Heaven has willed it that the victory gained then should be now welded into an eternal principle. Freedom, spoke God through his earthly ministers, shall prevail, and war, the chief agent of the oppressor, shall cease to exist. And this superb achievement was vouchsafed to the English-speaking race, for He said, 'Surely they are my people.' "

Little wonder that a sermon pulsating with tumultuous words like these, which poured on with torrential force for over forty minutes, should have electrified all who heard and all who read.

England surged and swayed with such abounding excitement during the early days after the close of the war, that there was some fear lest the national character should suffer more from the resultant hysteria than from the accumulated strain and burthen of the campaign. The public mind required an anti-climax to bring it back to the calm content of the workaday world, and relief came from a totally unexpected quarter.

Mr. W. S. Penley, the well-known comedian, thinking that people needed some relaxation after the stress of conflict, wrote to the papers to call attention to the fact that "*Charley's Aunt* was still running."

And then everybody laughed, which was a wholesome sign of returning sanity.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A MESSAGE OF EVERLASTING PEACE.

DURING the early days after the close of the war, the attention of the authorities, both in England and on the Continent, was devoted exclusively toward making complete arrangements for the care of the wounded and providing relief for those who had been rendered homeless and foodless by reason of the campaign.

So widespread was the area covered by hostilities that these tasks were in themselves colossal, and might at any other period of the world's history, not so utterly dominated by a succession of gigantic undertakings, have evoked the astonished plaudits of civilisation.

The fleets of the belligerents, which had so lately carried devastation and ruin to peaceful ports, were now utilised for the more kindly purpose of ferrying ample supplies of food and clothing from the vast stores accumulated in the United Kingdom to those points on the Continent where distress was most severe. The work of the Government in coping with this final legacy of hunger and misery left by the war was rendered easier by the fact that during the concluding stages of the campaign the ocean had in reality been a British highway.

British and American merchantmen were consequently free to come and go as they chose, and there was not the disruption in the commercial marine which must have eventuated from any other solution of the struggle save that secured by the complete and overwhelming strength of the British

Navy, admirably amplified as it was by the ships of the United States.

But no sooner had departmental activity been fully concentrated upon this work of succour than the keen attention of ministers in England and the United States was given to solving the political and social problems which now confronted all who were responsible for the future safeguarding of the world. The cabinets of St. James and Washington sat almost continuously, and the cables between England and the United States were wholly monopolised by the long messages which were constantly passing between the Chiefs of the two countries.

The very magnitude of the reforms they contemplated brought about an element of ease and clearness in outline. Local and personal considerations, which in a scheme of lesser detail would have proved troublesome in settlement, were now necessarily swept aside with ruthless vigour. When the future of the world was at stake petty considerations affecting a minor state or an insignificant section of the community could not be entertained.

As a preliminary measure, Lord Salisbury and the American President decided that a Manifesto should be drawn up and signed by the two titular heads of the English-speaking race in order that the principles vindicated and established by the war should be set forth plainly, fearlessly, and unmistakably. Such a document required much care in preparation, and it was felt that if any error were committed in text or significance, the lapse should certainly be on the side of simplicity. At last it was approved by both governments and signed by Her Majesty the Queen and by the President of the United States. It was distributed, in every language, throughout the world, and never before was document so eagerly scanned, so widely discussed, or so universally approved. The full text of this remarkable Manifesto was as follows :

“ AN INTERNATIONAL PROCLAMATION.

“ It has been decreed by Divine Providence that in the War which was recently brought to such a speedy and satisfactory close, victory should rest with the English-speaking people.

“ The victory thus achieved was so signal, so complete, and so far-reaching in its consequences, that we cannot refuse to recognise the intent of a greater power than has ever been vouchsafed to any section of the human race.

“ This clear expression of the Divine Will can only be interpreted in one way. War, with the countless miseries that come in its train, must forthwith cease, and it is by the medium of the most widespread conflict ever witnessed in the history of the world that Providence has seen fit in its inscrutable wisdom to make manifest its commands.

“ Great Britain and the United States are but the instruments chosen to accomplish the task. To their hands was committed the cause of suffering humanity, and as they did not shrink from their duty in the hour of difficulty and danger, so now they will not draw back from the undertaking until the peace of the world is placed upon a firm and lasting basis. We, therefore, acting on behalf of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the United States of America, hereby state our unalterable resolves :

“ 1st. That disputes between civilised nations shall henceforth be determined by a tribunal of International Arbitration, the constitution and powers of which shall be hereafter decided.

“ 2d. That no civilised nation shall be permitted to organise or maintain any Naval or Military armed force save in such limited degree as may be required for the preservation of law and order within the boundaries of the State. As a necessary consequence, all existing fortifications and accumulated munitions of war shall in due course be dismantled and destroyed.

“ 3d. That England and the United States shall equip and maintain a sufficient armed force, both by sea and land, for the purpose of giving effect to the principles herein enunciated, such armed force being kept in readiness for as long a period as the rulers of those countries shall deem fit and necessary to achieve this object.

“ 4th. That in the event of any uncivilised state threatening the peace of the world the representatives of Europe and America shall collectively determine and provide the means whereby such danger may be averted or satisfactorily met.

“ 5th. That an International Congress shall in due course assemble in London, at which the nations of Europe and the great powers of the East shall be represented, to determine the best manner whereby the requirements of this decree shall be brought into operation, the Governments of England and the United States reserving to themselves the right to control and direct the deliberations of such Congress.

“ 6th. The first duty which shall call for the attention of this International Congress will be the most effective method of securing general disarmament, compatible with considerations of expediency, as vast numbers of armed men must not be thrown too quickly into civil life. The disruption which would ensue to all industrial operations from too great precipitancy in such a step will thus be avoided.

“ 7th. The Congress shall next devote itself to the consideration of permanent boundaries between States and the adjustment of Colonial areas, with due respect to existing possessions and the development of unsettled localities adjoining thereto.

“ 8th. Notwithstanding the unprovoked nature of the attack made upon the United Kingdom, and despite the enormous sacrifices cheerfully borne by the peoples of Great Britain and the United States, it has been resolved that no indemnity shall be claimed from the assailants. We feel that the French, German, and Russian nations, with whom we have no quarrel, were led into this disastrous war by the

short-sighted ambition of their rulers, and in refusing to inflict grievous financial burthens upon them in order to pay the entire costs of the struggle we are giving the best possible guarantee of the motive which dominates our action, namely, to secure lasting peace and happiness for the inhabitants of the world.

"9th. There will be no interference with the internal affairs of States, or the methods of government adopted, so long as constitutional means alone are requisitioned for their settlement. But the use of force will not be permitted under any circumstances, save as before stated, for the preservation of law and order at the hands of the properly constituted authorities.

"We humbly pray the blessing of Providence upon our designs, and we trust that the united peoples of Europe will co-operate with us in the effort to bring them to a successful and irrevocable consummation."

The effect produced on the Continent by this proclamation was stupendous.

Not only did the magnificent scope of the proposals made by the two governments appeal to the imagination of every man who cared for the progress of the human race and the triumph of collectivism, but the magnanimity of England and America in refusing to fine the other belligerents evoked the keenest gratitude from the already too heavily taxed agricultural and commercial classes in Central Europe.

Naturally enough, in some quarters there was a disposition to resent the masterful tone adopted by the victors.

But behind the dignified and convincing language of the proclamation there stood the terrific power of those who spoke. It was computed that when Paris fell no less than twelve millions of Anglo-Saxons were armed for the struggle and cynically prepared to prosecute it to the bitter end.

To those nations of Europe who had not participated in the war the proclamation came first as a thunderbolt. But Austria, and Italy, and Spain, no less than the weaker kingdoms of the North, quickly saw that the project afforded

relief to them as well as to the stricken peoples of France, Germany, and Russia.

In the Far East, China hailed the glad tidings which placed the restless Japanese under the control of a mightier power than hers, and if the rulers of Turkey saw a definite end to a government of rapine and disorder, the oppressed nations of the Levant rejoiced in the certainty that the period of deliverance was at hand.

The German Emperor threw himself with heart and soul into the work of regeneration. He had learned by sad experience, that the greatness of Germany depended not upon her militarism, but upon the commercial and industrial adaptability of her sons, and he now devoted his superabundant energies to the mastering of the technical and mechanical details of manufacturing enterprises with as much keenness as he had formerly displayed in qualifying himself to lead armies and fleets in action.

By a stroke of genius, M. Bourgeois pacified Paris.

When the proclamation was read in the French Chamber the assembled Deputies were dumb with amazement at its extraordinary conclusions.

The Premier was quick to note the excitable feelings under which the House laboured, and he ventured upon an anti-climax, which proved to be a greater *coup* than he could have anticipated in his most sanguine moments.

"You have heard the decisions arrived at by England and the United States," he said, speaking with calm deliberation. "To me they seem both reasonable and temperate. But they cannot now be discussed in their entirety. At this moment I would beg to draw the attention of honourable deputies to the fact that if the Paris Exhibition of 1900 is to be as successful as we would desire, not another instant must be lost in pushing forward the too long suspended preparations."

The Premier's suggestion buzzed quickly through the Chamber, and thence into the city and the provinces.

Its philosophy was undoubted and acceptable. France

had had enough of war. Let her revert to her vastly more pleasing rôle as supplying the playground of the world. There was joy that night in the cafés and hope in the Magasin du Louvre.

In bestowing honours and rewards upon the officers and men of the army and navy, who had served the cause of England so well, her Majesty the Queen was called upon to face a task as formidable in extent as it was gratifying in nature.

In the first instance a special message was forwarded, through the American President, to the Senate and House of Representatives, for permission to be accorded to her Majesty to suitably decorate the principal officers of the American army and navy. The required sanction was as cordially given as it was graciously demanded, and in the result Admiral Manan and General Smithson received the grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, whilst among other recipients of the Royal Victorian Order figured the name of Colonel W. J. Ritchie.

It was not until the legitimate claims of all the principal American Officers had been satisfied that her Majesty preferred to the Government of the United States the most important request of all. This was no less than a most warmly-worded expression of her wish that legislative sanction might be given to the investiture of the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of State for War with the Knighthood of the Garter. Such an unexampled departure from precedent deeply impressed the public mind both in England and across the Atlantic, for even democratic America felt that the prompt acceptance by the House of Representatives of the honour proposed to be conferred upon the chief citizens of the United States was in itself a testimony of the high regard in which the time-honoured and most distinguished institution of the English Court was held by every member of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Nor were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa,

and other Colonies forgotten in the least degree. Not only were their political leaders singled out for marks of royal appreciation, but the British Prime Minister intimated that Government grants would be made towards recouping all ports which had suffered loss or damage by reason of unforeseen attacks by the allied fleets.

In dealing with the British army and navy her Majesty's advisers were compelled, for obvious reasons, to restrict the range of definite reward. Where every officer and man had so nobly done his duty it was impossible, save in very isolated cases, to select individuals for distinction. Of course, in the case of Generals who commanded in the field this restrictive rule was necessarily departed from.

Lord Wolseley's services as Commander-in-Chief of the entire army were recognised by a Dukedom, whilst Lord Roberts, Sir George White, and Sir Evelyn Wood each became an Earl. A similar honour was bestowed upon Sir Nowell Salmon, Sir Beauchamp Seymour, and Rear-Admiral Dale, whilst Lord Charles Beresford became a Marquis in his own right.

Baronetcies and knighthoods were distributed with a free hand to divisional and fleet commanders, and a bonus of six months' pay was given to every officer and man who had served in the field. A similar donation was bestowed upon the relatives of all who were killed in action or died from disease whilst under arms.

But it was generally felt that the intentions of the Government in the latter respect, although generous enough in view of the tremendous financial responsibilities entailed by the war, did not march with the full measure of public sentiment. In England no less than the United States, there was a deep conviction that private generosity should supplement the relief given by the State to soldiers who had been disabled for life by their wounds, and to the widows and orphans who had lost their bread-winners owing to the vicissitudes of the campaign.

For some time people were at a loss to know how to reconcile their wishes with reasonable performance, but the question was solved in a curious and eminently satisfactory manner.

The Baroness Burdett-Coutts had given a small and extremely select supper party at her residence, No. 153 Piccadilly. This gathering was destined to become famous in history.

The majority of the guests were millionaires, and curiously enough the somewhat limited section of humanity which comprises this fortunate class was represented to an unusually large extent. There were present not only the chief financial magnates of London and South Africa, but it happened that among the guests were four of the richest citizens of the United States.

The conversation during one portion of the proceedings turned upon the need there was for adequate provision being made for the humble sufferers from the war, and the opinion was unanimously expressed that the decision of the Government, although reasonable from the point of view of ministers responsible for taxation, yet in no way met the urgent demands of maimed men and helpless women and children. The noble and generous-minded lady who presided at the table was very emphatic in her views that at such a time the rich should carefully consider the real scope of the obligations imposed upon them by their wealth.

"We ought to realise," she said, "that were it not for the splendid heroism and absolute self-abandonment displayed by even the poorest members of the community, we should not now be in possession of our property under the peaceful security of a strong and impartial Government. We owe all that we have in the world to the men who have given their lives in defence of England, and I, for one, am prepared to mark my sense of what they have done by a donation towards some fund to alleviate the wants of those who are in need, and such donation will be by reason of its

amount some testimony of the sincerity of my conviction. I may tell you," she continued, looking round at the assembled company, "that I have already given orders for the realisation of securities worth a million sterling, which sum I propose to hand over to such public committee as may be entrusted with the distribution of relief upon the most popular basis."

A hum of admiring appreciation passed round the table and the excitement grew when Messrs. Barney Barnato and J. B. Robinson announced their intention of following the precedent established by the philanthropic Baroness.

The Americans present looked at each other with growing eagerness in their faces, and at last Mr. John D. Stonyman drily remarked to his compatriots: "I think it's about time we raised them a few."

Springing to his feet he cried: "I like your idea and it ought to go well in the States. Just to give it a shove off I put up two millions."

"Dollars or pounds?" shouted a voice from the end of the table.

"Pounds, of course," he replied. "We are not talking silver here to-night."

Thus the friendly rivalry sped, until in that room alone England had contributed eleven millions sterling and America nine millions to the Patriotic Fund which was shortly opened for the benefit of the necessitous.

The *Times* and the other chief newspapers of the United Kingdom warmly took up the idea, and the country contributed to an unprecedented extent. So fast and furious was the enthusiasm that Parliament itself felt constrained to direct and control the movement. A strong committee of both Houses was nominated to join the representatives of the army and navy for the purpose of efficiently administering the fund, and by its effectual distribution a vast amount of misery and privation was averted.

This great work of succour and alleviation progressed

steadily and contemporaneously, side by side with the orderly progress now being made by the nations of Europe towards political and social regeneration.

By the time that the Congress of London met for the purpose of entering upon a solemn, anxious, and protracted consideration of the many important questions raised by the joint proclamation of the Queen and the American President, the evil passions engendered by the war were already becoming quietly extinguished and it truly seemed that the world was at last about to enter upon a period of rest and peace and mutual helpfulness.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MOSTLY MATRIMONIAL.

“ IRENE ! ”

“ Yes, dear.”

“ What does it mean when a spider runs across the window ? ”

“ Oh, where is he ? Are you quite sure he is running straight across ? For goodness’ sake don’t blow at him.”

Irene Vyne came quickly from the comfortable chair in which she had been enjoying “ a good read ”—the first novel from Mudie’s for over six months—and stood by Ethel’s side to see the tiny insect, so unusual a visitor in a West-end drawing-room, rapidly scudding across the broad window-pane. He deviated neither to right nor left but travelled off towards the frame as though a nice juicy fly were well within sight and safely caught in his web.

Irene heaved a sigh of satisfaction :

“ Really,” she cried, “ a somewhat close acquaintanceship with Tommy Atkins has made me superstitious, and I am *so* glad that this has happened.”

“ Well ? ” said Ethel, “ don’t be silly, but tell me at once. I saw him first.”

“ It portends,” said Irene, with mock seriousness, “ a long journey for a dear friend, a very long journey in your case, and a shorter one in mine, and that nothing on earth will stop either from coming straight here.”

Ethel looked sadly and wistfully at her friend as she heard the explanation of the spider’s transit over the glass. “ It may be true enough for you, dear,” she said, with a slight

catch in her voice, "as 'Teddy is within ten hours of London, but Frank is on the staff in Russia, and the *Times* says we will be compelled to keep an army of occupation there quite a long time until the political settlement of the country is completed. Poor little spider. He meant well, I am sure."

They smiled at the conceit, but they both started when they heard the doors of a hansom slammed open in front of the house, followed by a vigorous pull at the visitors' bell.

"Now, who on earth can be calling at this time of the day?" cried Irene, for it was past six o'clock.

Ethel did not answer. She had suddenly become greatly agitated, for no assignable reason. Unable to control her emotion, she walked to the door of the drawing-room in order to escape from the commonplaces of some casual acquaintance who might be putting in an appearance. When she opened the door she was confronted by a footman and an officer in the undress uniform of the Royal Navy.

In an instant the latter personage sprang forward and caught her in his arms, whilst the footman discreetly closed the door, and thus explained the case to Buttons in the hall: "'E said as 'is nyme was Commander Rodney, but 'e did n't give me a chawnce to sy a word. They seemed to know 'im all right hupstairs, all the syme."

Rodney did not at first perceive that Irene was in the room. Her eyes had filled with tears at the knowledge that her friend's happiness was now complete, for this was the first meeting of the lovers since that memorable night at the Paris Embassy when Frank had been compelled to forego his waltz, and could not even wait to say "Good-bye."

She discreetly gazed at the window, trying to find that thrice-blessed spider again, and she only turned in response to Rodney's cordial greeting.

"I have been sent home overland with despatches," he

explained. "I was obliged to go straight to the Admiralty and War Office, and came on here at the earliest moment without even waiting to change my clothes. But surely you knew I was coming?" he continued, turning to Ethel.

"Not until I opened the door, and you—— How could you be so ridiculous before the footman?" and she blushed so prettily that Frank nearly became ridiculous again.

"But I wired you from Vienna, thirty hours ago."

"I never got it."

They were speculating upon the probable cause of the mysterious loss of the telegram when a knock at the door elicited a "Come in" from Irene.

The door opened gently, there was a discreet cough, and the footman entered, his action causing the three occupants of the room to laugh heartily. He was far too well trained a servant to even smile. He solemnly approached Irene and said:

"There's a telegram, milady, which nobody knows 'oo it's for, and will you please to open it, milady."

The buff envelope was addressed to "Ethel, Grosvenor Square, London," and the same address appeared in type-written characters within. It was undoubtedly Rodney's message, for which the Post-Office officials could find no lucid explanation, until an unusually smart post-man remembered that there was a Miss Ethel Harington staying at Lord Vyne's residence in the square.

Frank vowed that he wrote the full name and number of the house, but no one believed him, and, if anything, his sweetheart thought more of the error than of its possible explanation. His thoughts must surely have been very full of her if he believed that the Austrian telegraph operator at Vienna would be sufficiently enlightened by this vague description.

When the precious telegram had been safely stowed away in Ethel's purse, Frank said:

"By the way, where is your brother?"

"He is in Paris, and Irene has not had a letter from him for two days."

"Well, this is the second day," grudgingly admitted Irene, "and I won't find him guilty until after to-night's post."

They were so busily engaged in talking that none of them heard the advent of another new arrival, nor, in the growing dusk, did they notice the door open.

This time the footman was prepared for eventualities. The moment he turned the handle he exclaimed quite pompously "Major Harington." Irene's chair fell over, so quickly did she spring from it, and the footman was able to impart delicious confidences to Buttons for a second time:

"They 're 'avin' a fair old beano hupstairs, I can tell *you*," he concluded with grinning emphasis.

Lady Vyne, good soul, had been indulging in a quiet nap before dinner, and her astonishment was great when she reached the drawing-room, whilst his lordship soon returned to dinner from his club and heartily welcomed the wanderers, especially Rodney, whose long absence rendered his unexpected return all the more delightful.

Harington had been offered a short leave by Lord Roberts and, of course, eagerly availed himself of the favour. But in a little while, he explained, all the British troops now quartered in France would be quietly sent home. Indeed he hoped to be permanently back in town within a month.

Why he and Irene should look at each other when he said this, and why everybody else should laugh when they both blushed at being caught, no one troubled to explain.

But the incident set Rodney thinking, and the result of his cogitations became apparent a little later when, in a quiet corner of the drawing-room, he asked Ethel to marry him in November.

"I can't possibly be ready," she protested.

"Not even if there's an opportunity for a double wedding?" he said.

"I am quite sure Irene won't be married until early next year," she whispered, "but—but—if she agrees for November I will agree too."

Now, as both girls had debated the question many times from every possible point of view, and had already determined that a double wedding in November was absolutely within the bounds of even the dressmaker's limited imagination, it will be seen that there was not much need for the many and convincingly ingenious arguments used by their suitors before the date was finally fixed.

But such are the ways of women, and they are pleasant ways withal.

So it came to pass that after a brilliant ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square, which was attended among many other representatives of rank and fashion, by the Duke of Sussex, and the Earl of Tramore—few will recognise Lord Wolseley and Lord Roberts by these later titles—Major and Lady Irene Harington, and Commander and Mrs. Rodney drove back to the well remembered house in Grosvenor Square to attend a very lively, not to say uproarious, wedding-breakfast.

By a little kindly arrangement made by the authorities it was not until the meal was well advanced that letters were handed to the two ladies announcing that her Majesty had been pleased to bestow upon them the insignia of the order of the Royal Red Cross for their services with the field hospital in France, and at the same time the War Office and Admiralty announced to Harington and Rodney that they were respectively gazetted Colonel and Post Captain.

They set forth on their wedding tours almost at the same moment, Irene and her husband to pass a quiet honeymoon in Yorkshire, whilst Ethel and Frank started for Paris and Egypt, as Mrs. Rodney would not be content until she had seen with her own eyes the exact locality where her sailor lover had blown up the Suez Canal.

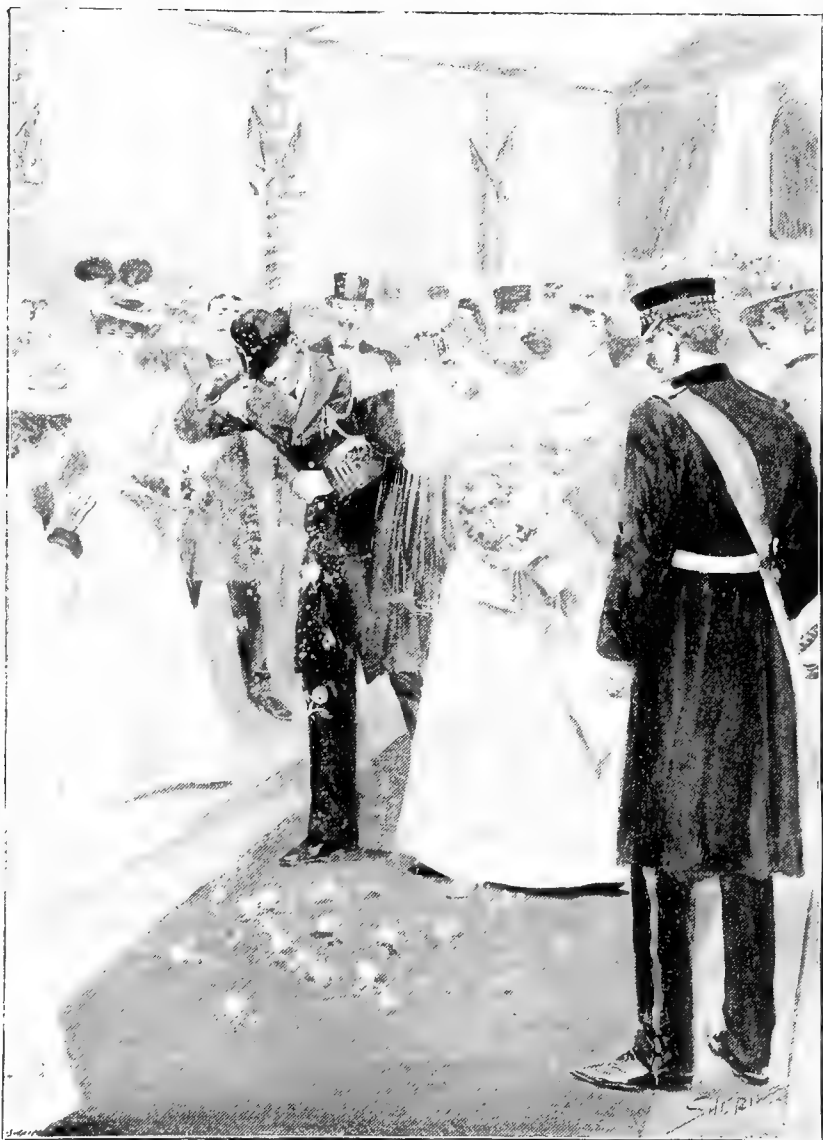
By a singular coincidence they joined the *Peninsular* at Brindisi and it was from the deck of that fine steamer whilst passing through the canal that Rodney pointed out to his wife the spot where he had succeeded in inflicting upon the allied nations the most damaging blow struck at them during the opening period of the war.

In the bar parlour of the Cat and Anchor at Catford a goodly company of cyclists assembles nightly to discuss old stories and new tires. The conversation ranges from reminiscences of the great fights in the Seine Valley to the latest record established by the Club. But never a race along the Ripley road can compare in interest with the spin taken by the Catford Cyclist Corps from Vernon to Beuil.

The perpetual president of the Club is Major William Briggs, who retired from the army with her Majesty's permission to retain his rank and uniform. He lives his magnificent part with unassuming dignity. The one story he never tells, but which is often told of him for the edification of admiring juniors, is the record of his adventure with the Zouaves and how he preferred to look into the Valley of the Shadow rather than save his life by treachery.

He is vastly improved in manner and appearance is the gallant Major. He bears upon him the stamp of a man who has deserved well of his country by responsible and noble deeds, and it is rumoured that so profitable has his business as a cycle manufacturer become, since his return home, that shortly it will be converted into a limited liability company with a gigantic capital.

At Worthing, Colonel Perkins was unanimously chosen as Mayor for the succeeding year. Now that the alarms of war were over his good wife resolved that the new-born greatness of her husband would not permit of his personal attendance to the small details of a drapery establishment. It was obvious that the British Leonidas, the man who



"A BRILLIANT CEREMONY AT ST. GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE."

struck the first and most determined blow at the enemies of England, could not be expected to measure yards of calico or receive mysterious confidences as to the material for linings. So the shop, which thrived amazingly, was handed over to an experienced manager, and Colonel and Mrs. Perkins with the children removed to a larger house in the fashionable West.

It was difficult to know how to recompense adequately the services which Mr. Thompson had rendered to the nation by the invention of his marvellous electric rifle.

There could not be the slightest doubt that by its aid alone Paris had been captured, and the capture of Paris meant the immediate cessation of the war, which must otherwise have dragged on its weary length for weeks, if not months. What this meant, from the mere financial aspect, will be realised when it is remembered that the joint expenditure of Great Britain and the United States upon the maintenance of troops and ships in active service was estimated at £2,500,000 sterling daily.

When approached on the subject, Mr. Thompson himself emphatically repudiated any idea of receiving more than a modest reward for his work, and he named an amount which, whilst ridiculously small, would in his opinion suffice for the needs of himself and his family.

The matter however came before Parliament and a proposal was made that as it was understood to be her Majesty's intention to confer a baronetcy upon the famous inventor, the nation must give him the means of maintaining his new position with dignity and ease. It was consequently resolved that as the expense of manufacturing the apparatus and preparing the rifles had already been borne departmentally, Sir Henry Thompson should receive a bonus of £2 for each weapon supplied to the troops engaged in the attack upon the French capital.

In other words he received £200,000, which was exactly twenty times as much as he had asked for.

.

Peyton and De Vismes, the heroes of the "Ride through the Pass," both received promotion and the Victoria Cross. For his subsequent services in organising the successful attack upon the Central Asian Railway, Colonel W. J. Peyton was gazetted a K. C. S. I. The native comrades of the two British Officers were also rewarded by the Government of India with a generosity that evoked the liveliest approval in every cavalry bazaar from Peshawar to Tuticorin.

When Colonel Ritchie and his charming wife arrived in New York, *en route* from London to San Francisco, they were met by two tug-boats full of interviewers, and were compelled to hold a series of brilliant receptions in the Waldorf Hotel to afford their numerous friends and innumerable admirers an opportunity of congratulating the famous leader of cavalry upon the many splendid achievements which his audacious originality had rendered possible to the troops of the United States.

The chief railway companies running to the West competed for the honour of supplying a special train to convey Colonel and Mrs. Ritchie and their friends to the Golden Gate, but in each case the invitation contained a polite hint that the journey would not be performed within sixty hours. Those fourteen ruined engines still loomed large in the memory of American railway men.

In San Francisco, of course, the party came in for a State ovation, and the last news to hand of the gallant Colonel is that he has been cordially commanded to fill an honoured place on board the *Hohenzollern* when that distinguished yacht next bears her Imperial master to Cowes.

And so the curtain drops upon the chief actors of this drama of to-morrow, whilst the stage is cleared for the superb spectacle of a world free from bloodshed and rapine and famine.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DESTINY OF THE RACE.

SO peace ruled : not that sullen silence which harbours in its breast poisonous passions, but a peace such as the world had never known, deep, eternal and serene.

In this last mad eruption the evil genius of war had exhausted itself and humanity had cast it forth as a noisome thing to be tolerated no more. The Saxon race, for a moment, held the world in fear. But it was only to give to the nations abiding rest, to soothe ambition, to repair injustice, to mete out to all freedom before the law of justice.

Such a vision of a new world and of a new age had Tennyson. Was this the consummation of the poet's dream ? Had mankind progressed,

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.

There was no room for scepticism in that noble mind. For in the same breath he wrote,

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

Did not Shelley also sing in tones of triumphant prophecy,

The world's great age begins anew
The golden years return.

This surely was the "newer Hellas" that he saw, the Hellas of a world completely free. And yet not from coun-

tries of romance, lands where warm blood keeps fresh the passion of poetry, did the miracle come. It was from the race called dedicate to commerce—the sturdy, unimaginative, practical people whose home, first set in the little Island of Great Britain, spread forth to a new Continent in the West, and then broadened out till it covered the earth and sea.

Such is the destiny of race. Three empires has the world known. Transient tyrannies have swept across it, and in the dark backward of time there loom gigantic shadows of strange dynasties covering the earth with their power. Of them history has no word to say. But since man's life became clear and intelligible, there have been but three preponderating races, each representing a cosmic force and taking its place in the due developement of the destiny of humanity.

First came the Greek, the strong, sensuous being, who gave order to chaos, who wrested from its bondage the perfect life of man. His was the rule of Art, that great force which gives each thing its place and finds for each a use, which cuts off the civilised from the barbarous, which carves the rich doorway of the Temple of the Ideal. Greece gave to mankind its implements, its faith, its yearnings, its strength : and doing so exhausted herself.

There was the Roman, the man of action, not the dreamer of Hellas, not wrapped in the sensuous charms of art, but the strenuous builder of empire. It was the destiny of Rome to found the great doctrines of jurisdiction, to give Law to the nations. Hers was a civil, not an æsthetic strength. As her great poet has in noble verses propounded :

Others, I know it well,
The breathing bronze will chase,
And from the death-white marble
Upcall the living face,
Will plead with eloquence not thine,
Will mete and map the skies,

And with the voice of science tell
When stars will set and rise.
'Tis Thine, O Rome, to rule :
This mission ne'er forego,
To spare in war the vanquished
And bring the haughty low.

She ruled by virtue of impartial Law, by the just principles which brought all peoples willingly to her feet. And yet even Law was not enough to create a lasting empire. Others arose who also knew her Law and from her nerveless grasp snatched the sceptre of her dominion. And in a day the empire of Rome melted away before the vigorous Northmen.

Now has the tale taken up the third overwhelming dynasty that the world has known. The new empire is that of the Saxon race. Art and Law had had their day : there followed the dominance of Science.

The nations had learnt the lessons of beauty and knew how to disfigure them : had caught the message of Law and knew how to abuse it. But Nature has her revenges, and as the earth opened out before the pioneer, and discovery narrowed the great Continent of Europe and brought its peoples into active rivalry, it became clear that the new empire was not one of orb and sceptre :—not the annexation of countries and the absorption of alien races. It was to be an empire of another, a subtler, a more enduring, a more resistless kind.

For the message which science gave the world was that that race alone would conquer in the struggle for existence which showed greatest adaptability, which could easiest accommodate itself to the boundless variations of earth's wayward moods. It was the cruel law of the survival of the fittest. There was need of some versatile people who feared no change of climate or contradiction of condition, for whom heat and cold, desert and fertile land, sea and plain, peace and war, luxury and indigence, struggle and ease were alike—whose temperament had infinite degrees

•

passing from sanguine heat to phlegmatic torpor. For such a race the earth lay open, offering its dominion.

Here lay the tragedy of less fortunate peoples—more blessed, perhaps, in rich qualities of heart—more developed it might be, in gentle graces and warm emotions—but forced, after all, to pay the penalty of their very virtues.

Life is eternal action and re-action, and from the being who rejoices in a nervous temperament which leads him to the pleasant paths of art, she sucks the virile vigour which should nourish and sustain. It is the fate of the Celt. He exhausts himself in the passion of life and scatters his years from him in each gust of self-abandonment. He is the invalid amongst men, the sick person, incapable of continued effort, needing all that luxury can give and yielding himself to dreams and visions and things impalpable.

Nor is the more vigorous people of romance, that northern people, fitted for the struggle. For Romance plays too great a part in its life. Its character is weakened by sensuousness, and its vision dulled by speculation. It may be led to victory, it cannot take itself to the goal. For in this new empire it needs that each and every man shall himself be leader. It must be a nation of pioneers.

This, then, is the mission of the Saxon Race—slowly but surely to map itself over the earth, to absorb the nations, to bring to pass that wonderful dream of a world united in a single family and speaking a common speech.

How rich the blood, how noble the inheritance of Britain! She has the stern indomitable defiance of the Saxon, the strenuousness of the Celt, the romantic genius of the Teuton. She is both actor and dreamer. Her poets have dwelt beside the founders of her empire. Reckless of danger, amorous of what is new, versatile in action, ready in resource, fertile beyond the ingenuity of chance, adaptable to all changes of climate and modes of life, at home in ice-bound regions and beneath the equatorial sun, carrying with her the capacity for empire, the power to rule, and obstinate in the attainment

•

of her desire, she is bound by no limit of zone, no dimension of geography.

And thus she early found her power. She has led the world in all its noblest struggles. Whilst other nations groaned in kingly servitude, she was already free. Her battle of liberty was fought before the hope of freedom dawned in Europe. Her conscience refused that allegiance to sacerdotalism which drenched the Continent with blood; and her reformation, long premeditated, came, if not without the agony of struggle, still gently and without excess. Her Parliament, at almost the dawn of her history, gave equal laws, disputed with kings, and drove out tyrants. Her Press was free, her speech unrestrained. And as she battled ever for freedom, so she gave herself to the passionate pursuits of knowledge, to the mysteries of philosophy, to the sublime teaching of science. Thus, armed with all that discovery would yield her and owing allegiance only to herself, she poured her sons over the earth and upon the seas and in remote regions founded a second empire. America arose—that second England—new home of the Saxon Race and heir to her inspiration and her destiny—America which developed a new type of being, more versatile still, and still more strenuous. And the impulse went on, giving life to Canada, peopling the vast continent of Australia, carrying civilised arts to mysterious Africa and to venerable India, and on every continent, in every sea, stamping itself in eternal characters.

And how could such a race be resisted? For, wherever it penetrated it did not languish under conditions unfavourable to its growth. With miraculous ease the Saxon remodelled himself to obey every variation of climate, every manner of sky, every form of life, till it became clear that he was no fixed irrevocable type, but of plastic mould, responsive to the slightest touch, and reproducing himself in a hundred different shapes. The Saxon is content wherever he is: the instinct of his blood tells him that the earth is his home

and that his spirit must inform the nations and regenerate decaying peoples.

Commerce bent itself to Britain and all peoples entrusted to her their possessions. The Saxon tongue has become the speech of the world, the Saxon ensign—whether British or American—is the flag of the seas.

Thus, as life becomes more complex and harder grows the struggle, there is no escape for people not fitted to bear its strain, and the Saxon race will absorb all and embrace all, reanimating old civilisations and giving new vigour to exhausted nations. England and America—their destiny is to order and rule the world, to give it peace and freedom, to bestow upon it prosperity and happiness, to fulfil the responsibilities of an all-devouring people : wisely to discern and generously to bestow.

This vision—far-off may-be,—already dawns : and in the glory of its celestial light is the peace of nations.

THE END.

New Fiction

The Maker of Moons.

By Robert W. Chambers, author of "A King in Yellow,"
"The Red Republic," "A King and a Few Dukes," etc.
Large 12°

An Uncrowned King.

A Romance of High Politics. Large 12°

The Final War.

By Louis Tracy. Illustrated. 12°

The Tower of the Old Schloss.

By Jean Porter Rudd, author of "Bas' Thérèse," "The
Little Tailor of the Ritten," etc. 12° . . . \$1 25

The Babe, B.A.

Being the Uneventful History of a Young Gentleman at
Cambridge. By Edward F. Benson, author of "Dodo,"
"The Rubicon," etc. Third issue in the group of
Tales of College Life. 12°. Illustrated . . . \$1 00

A Princetonian.

A Story of Undergraduate Life at the College of New Jersey.
By James Barnes, author of "For King and Country,"
"Midshipman Farragut," etc. Uniform with "Harvard
Stories" and "Yale Yarns." Fourth issue in the group
of Tales of College Life. 12°. Illustrated.

The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason.

By Melville Davisson Post. Hudson Library, No. 16.
Paper 50 cts. 16° \$1 00

"Mr. Mason's volume presents some curious problems in connection
with the existing criminal law. Randolph Mason is a Sherlock Holmes,
who, instead of assisting justice, defeats it."

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK AND LONDON

Three Notable Books

The Red Republic. A Romance of the Commune.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, author of "The King in Yellow, etc. *Second Edition.* Large 12°, \$1.25.

"With all its rush and excitement there is a solid basis of pain-taking and thoughtfulness in 'The Red Republic.' Mr. Chambers is wholly free from self-consciousness; indeed his gifts seem to be little short of genius. Wonderfully vivid and graphic."—*N. Y. Press.*

"Mr. Chambers shows great familiarity with the many dreadful days of 1871, and Mr. Thiers' policy is critically examined. 'The Red Republic' abounds in action."—*N. Y. Times.*

"'The Red Republic' has the healthy ring of a young man's book. Mr. Chambers can do what few men can do, he can tell a story."—*N. Y. Journal.*

"I do not think that one need hesitate to call 'The Red Republic' the best American novel of the year."—VANCE THOMPSON in *N. Y. Morning Advertiser.*

"The book will commend itself not only for its strength and vividness, but for imagination and fancy. . . . Glow with gentle beauty and romance, putting in striking contrast the barbarity of war."—DROCH in *N. Y. Life.*

A King and a Few Dukes. A Romance. By

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, author of "The Red Republic." Large 12°, \$1.25.

"No superior fiction has appeared in months. . . . It is a charming love story, attractively told in a way that is essentially Mr. Chambers' own."—*N. Y. Times.*

"A more charming, wholly delightful story, it would be difficult to name in the whole range of English fiction. That is saying much, but not one bit more than the book deserves. . . . The characters are wonderfully well drawn."—*N. Y. World.*

"This latest of Mr. Chambers' stories is written in a very charming manner, and with all the grace and finish that have made the writings of the author so popular during the past."—*Albany Union.*

The Maker of Moons. By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

Large 12°. (*In Press.*)

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK AND LONDON

